

Farming for a Better Climate



Woodhead Farm

Woodhead Farm is a 180 cow dairy near Newmilns in Ayrshire, owned and run by John Kerr in partnership with his mum Anne.

The farm covers 141 hectares with access to additional rented land. Cropping is predominantly grass, with 16 ha of wholecrop. There is also 12ha of farm woodland.

John and Anne are keen to do what they can to improve profitability and reduce costs at Woodhead and have volunteered to work with SRUC as a *Climate Change Focus Farm*. Over the three year initiative, John and Anne

will explore practical steps to benefit the farm business and reduce the farm carbon footprint.



Name	John and Anne Kerr
Farm	Woodhead
Locality	Ayrshire
Farm type	Dairy
Size	141 ha

How might climate change affect Woodhead?

As a feature of climate change, it's predicted that winters could become warmer and wetter, with drier, warmer summers. We could also see an increase in extreme weather events, such as heavy, localised downpours.

John said "*Wetter weather means cows will need to be indoors longer, impacting on feed costs and increasing the amount of slurry we have to deal with. We are already looking at ways to actively make our business more robust, for example we have increased our slurry storage capacity and are moving towards a paddock grazing system*".

How can you benefit from activities at Woodhead?

John and Anne are hosting a series of on-farm discussion group meetings to exchange practical ideas to increase farm efficiency and improve production. For more information on events, efficiency measures and what other farmers are doing, visit www.farmingforabetterclimate.org find us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter [@SACFarm4Climate](https://twitter.com/SACFarm4Climate)

Case Study

Find out what other farmers are doing to improve profitability and adapt to a changing climate in our series of case studies.

There are five sets of Practical Guides covering :

Use energy and fuels efficiently

Develop renewable energy

Lock carbon into soils and vegetation

Optimise the application of fertilisers and manures

Optimise livestock management and the storage of manure and slurry

Find further information, including links to other Practical Guides and Case Studies, at



www.farmingforabetterclimate.org

Funded by the Scottish Government as part of their Climate Change Advisory Activity

Websites

www.farmingforabetterclimate.org

www.adaptationscotland.org.uk

www.agrecalc.com



Woodhead Farm Case Study



Energy and renewables

As a dairy farm milking twice daily, John and Anne are keen to look at ways to cut the electricity bill, as fuel is only going to get more expensive.

Electricity use is already monitored at Woodhead, and following an energy audit John was able to estimate electricity use per cow and compare with benchmark figures. John said *“we were a little bit higher than figures for similar enterprises, so we will be looking at a range of options to reduce electricity use over the course of the initiative”*.

John and Anne already have renewables on the farm with the installation of a biomass boiler. John said *“the biomass boiler will contribute to our heating and hot water requirements, both for farm cottages and in the dairy, as well as bringing an additional income stream to the business”*.

Other opportunities for renewables are being explored. As John explained *“micro hydro was something we were keen on but after identifying a suitable site, the logistics became just too challenging. We are now taking a look at solar PV systems”*.

Nutrient Use

Knowing soil pH and nutrient status allows more targeted use of both slurry and bought in fertilisers.

John said *“With SRDP funding from Scottish Government, we have recently invested in a new slurry tower at Woodhead which has given us over 6 months storage capacity.*

With extra storage, we now have the flexibility to apply nutrients at the best time for the growing crop and it removes the need to get out onto fields through the winter when nutrients would be wasted and there is an increased risk of damaging soils”.

Getting more milk from grass

In order to achieve good intakes of grazed grass, John and Anne recognise the need to improve grassland management at Woodhead. After a period in New Zealand, John was able to adapt the paddock grazing system to suit Woodhead.

John said *“Although it’s a bit more labour intensive and we have had to invest in additional fencing and cow tracks, we are hoping this will help to make the best of the available forage and help us to increase grazing and silage yields at Woodhead. There may also be benefits in terms of livestock health, so we will be monitoring that too”*. Its hoped that a full scale paddock system can be implemented for grazing in 2015.

