

THE WOOL PRESS

April 2007

Volume 208

£1.00

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EDITORIAL

The extremely wet season has delayed many readers from getting sheep work finished and on to other essential tasks. It has made for frustrating times. By the time you read this April publication I hope you will be ready to plan some time out to attend workshops in late April.

The DOA is pleased to be able to bring Jim Gerrish to the Islands. Jim, as well as running many workshops with farmers each year, has a farm in Missouri, so he knows how to get his boots dirty as well! Take a look at Neil Judd's article and get in touch with the department if you would like to attend the workshops.

If you are not convinced that a move from set stocking might be an option worth considering on your farm read Andy Pollard's article using data from the simulated grazing trials. There is a powerful argument here in favour of managed grazing. Andy would like to hear your views. Joe Hollins has written this month about a castration method for young lambs and calves called the Burdizzo technique. Again I am sure Joe would welcome feedback.

With the abattoir export season in full swing Zoe Luxton, the OVS, has written clarifying the "pros" and "cons" of shearing sheep before slaughter and the use of movement certificates for stock.

Thanks to Dan Fowler' for contributing an article on a potential new industry for the Falklands, aquaculture. I had a sneak preview recently of the excellent site at Moody Brook where the action will be. Who can remember catching (and eating) Zebra trout in considerable quantities? Now, sadly there are few known stocks left! It would be good to see them back in ponds and streams. I am not sure about the worms though, but if they sell.....

Dip into Steve Pointing's article about his experiences back in DEFRA the UK. And lastly welcome to Erica and Lucas Berntsen who have joined the Department as trainees for the next three months. They are getting out onto farms where the action is.

Phyl Rendell
Director of Minerals & Agriculture

AQUACULTURE UPDATE

By Daniel Fowler

A year after the recruitment of Dr. Brendan Gara as Aquaculture Manager, the FIDC aquaculture machine continues to build up steam. The last few months have seen the recruitment of 3 new members of staff (Paul Ellis, Dan Fowler and Antoine Daille), the acquisition of a site (complete with poly-tunnels) and a building of links with overseas institutions who are willing to offer assistance.

Let's get things straight from the beginning. The aquaculture project is a non-commercial, small-scale trial, looking at a variety of things that could be done in the Falklands. We believe that there are aquaculture possibilities in the Islands, and by answering some of the technical questions we can hopefully demonstrate to the private sector how they can be realised. At the same time, we'll be helping to develop the aquaculture skills base within the Falklands, so as to have local people who can go on to establish and run their own projects. And, as a final bonus, a lot of the early work and research needed on fish, shellfish and algae in the Islands will lead to a better understanding of our surrounding environment.

Though our humble beginnings may be based in Stanley, Camp could be the real winner. Some of our eventual outputs could include profitable worm ponds anywhere around the coast, zebra trout being introduced to different streams and ponds, healthy mussels from around the islands being sold overseas and restocking of rivers with sea trout in popular fishing areas.

Anyone for worms? With all the talk of hydatids in the Falklands, it's time we heard something positive about worms. Ok, we may be talking about marine rag worms, but they're still worms, and they could turn out to be low maintenance and a worth-while bonus to farmers. Worms can be used by shrimp farmers, recreational anglers or as a replacement for fishmeal, and global demand is high. The low-tech approach that we're looking at would involve large shallow ponds constructed near the shore, with only feed and seawater as inputs. Pumping of seawater into ponds could be done using wind power, making this a low-tech, low-energy (therefore low-cost) operation that could be situated almost anywhere. Once up and running, we'd like to see farmers or landowners at the trial site, learning how it works, in order that they might set up a similar pond or two for themselves.

Trout - Fish farming doesn't just have to be about profit. Although we're looking at both sea-trout and zebra trout in with an eye to the commercial side, what I'm more excited about is the possibility of restocking ponds and lakes with the indigenous zebra trout. We'd like to breed sufficient numbers with a view to releasing them in selected waterways and ponds, helping to ensure their long-term survival. We could also restock rivers with brown trout, produced using adult fish from the same area. If you could guarantee your trout numbers were at a high level, recreational fishing could be expanded, and this could have a positive knock-on effect on Camp tourism.

If anybody in Camp has suitable streams or ponds and would like to see zebra trout introduced to them, we'd be keen to hear from you.

Mussels - And last, but by no means least, there are mussels. Mussels are already being cultivated at certain locations in the Islands, as well as being found all over. We are planning to improve upon the current bio-toxin testing, in order to bring it in-line with the EU regulations, allowing sales to the UK and overseas, increasing the potential market for Falklands shellfish. We will be looking at testing mussels and water from around the Islands

on a regular basis, to develop a greater understanding of the algae and bio-toxins.

See you at Farmers Week - With all of the above projects, we've got our work cut out, but with the current levels of optimism floating around the aquaculture office, we're ready for the challenge. If all goes according to plan, we'd love to show any interested parties around the facilities come farmers' week. But in the meantime if you are interested in the possibilities of zebra trout in your waterways, please email danielfowler@fidc.co.fk or call 27211.

THE PERFECT BURDIZZO TECHNIQUE

By Joe Hollins

There have been some fairly mean and bizarre methods of castration in the past - such as crushing the testes between two rocks (still in use just over 100 years ago!), or the Russian technique of stabbing the testes with a knife and carefully squeezing out the substance - and there have been a mass of failed patent devices, but the one that has persisted is the Burdizzo. It's not flawless, however, and much of it's success lies in the hands of the operator. Here's a handy little guide to its pros and cons - and how to do it right.

The Burdizzo is designed to irreversibly crush the spermatic cord whilst leaving the skin intact (though bruised). It does not part the cord, so feeling for a gap between two ends is misleading. Initially there is swelling of the testes, which takes about two weeks to fully subside as the testes undergo a sterile death, causing them to shrink and vanish. The scrotum should remain intact and healthy.

Technique:

- The object is to crush as little of the scrotal neck as realistically possible. Placing the clamp across the scrotal neck is a common error which causes scrotal death, sepsis, and severe setback.
- Lambs may be held on their backs, calves may be done standing. For the right handed operator, grasp the scrotum in the palm of the left hand, and with thumb and forefinger across the scrotal neck, feel for the cord in the neck and squeeze it over to the edge. The pinching between thumb and forefinger acts as a stop, while with the right hand the edge of the Burdizzo is placed above across the cord where it is now nicely taut. The corner lug - and the finger pinch - help prevent the cord from escaping as the handles are closed. The squeeze should be at 90 degrees to the scrotal neck.
- Leave on for at least 30 seconds, then release and feel for a crush in the cord. Repeat the procedure below the first mark (above causes unnecessary pain, whereas below is relatively numbed).
- Transfer to the other side and repeat the procedure.
- Make sure there is a gap of at least 1cm (young lambs 0.5cm) between the left and right crush marks. Ideally, slightly stagger the two sets. It is the near joining of the 2 sets of crush marks that can destroy the blood supply to the scrotum and cause it to die. This will cause prolonged healing, unnecessary pain, and a serious setback.
- For calves - with the larger Burdizzo - it is impossible to close the Burdizzo single handed. With practice it is possible to use a knee against the lower handle and one hand on the upper handle, while the other hand keeps the cord fixed in place. Letting go of the scrotal neck before closing the clamp will nearly always allow the cord to escape.

Disasters:

- Bad technique resulting in failure to properly crush the cord and unwanted ram/bull activity.
- Failure to crush the cord because of a poorly maintained instrument. **TIP:** always store a Burdizzo open . Storage closed causes metal fatigue and excessive give in the bushes. It is a finely designed instrument with little tolerance to wear and tear. This is the commonest cause of mass Burdizzo failure.
- Scrotal death because the operator has crushed too much skin.
- Crushing the penis - commoner than might be expected, and usually causing the animal's eventual death. Using the above technique, excessive crushing of tissue, and this complication, should be avoided.

We've all heard of Burdizzo failures, but using a well maintained piece of equipment, sound technique, and a barrowload of patience, the results should be consistently good.

SHEARING PRIOR TO TRANSPORTATION TO SAND BAY ABATTOIR

By Zoë Luxton

We have had some enquiries recently regarding shearing sheep before they are sent for slaughter, below is some information and guidance which I hope may be helpful.

There are 2 main benefits of pre-slaughter shearing, one is that you may gain a bit of cash from the wool as well as the carcass and the other is that the sheep are cleaner for us to kill (hopefully!). Even if they are not as clean as we need, at least they are easier to get clean and dry if they are clippies. The cleaner the sheep we kill the less risk of contamination on the carcasses.

Unfortunately, following every "pro" list there is always a "cons" list. Shearing sheep can obviously leave them with cuts and bruises. Bruised meat has to be trimmed off carcasses which, if we have had to trim a lot, will leave you with a lighter carcass thus less profit. It is illegal to transport animals with injuries/wounds that may cause further suffering to them while on the lorry – i.e. castration wounds, broken bones, shearing cuts.

Falkland Island legislation states wounds must be sufficiently healed (before an animal is transported) – i.e. well scabbed over to the point that movement is not going to cause the wound to re-open. The stress of shearing, immediately travelling and then killing is also going to cause the meat to be tough. Cold weather/sheep chill factors must also be considered on the welfare/stress side of things. Also roughies are much better protected from bumps and bruises during transport than a newly stripped ovine!

Based on the above information, FIMCo and the DoA are advising the following:

→ Wait at least 28 days after shearing with normal combs; or

→ wait at least 14 days after shearing with cover combs, before transporting sheep to the abattoir

Within this timeframe all but the most serious shearing cuts should be healing well and any bruising fading. Please do not send any sheep with wounds that are still obvious. Remember that factors such as infection/contamination, excess skin movement, wool

matting and sheer size will delay healing. Also don't forget about drug withdrawal times if you have given a wounded sheep a shot of antibiotics.

If you do want to shear pre-slaughter it is going to mean more sheep moving, getting them in, shearing, waiting, then re-gathering to send. However the benefits of these waiting times include letting the sheep gain a bit more weight or replenish any condition they may have lost through a night or two in the shed followed by a shivery post-shearing period. Secondly, sheep with a months wool growth will be slightly more buffered from bumps received during travelling which inevitably causes more bruising.

You will need to weigh up whether the gain from your wool will be worth it compared to the shearing/extra moving costs.

Remember any shearing done now (after March 15th) must be done with cover combs anyway. Any questions? Call the abattoir on 27213.

CALLING ALL ANIMALS.....

By Zoë Luxton

As you will have noticed with the arrival of your new pad of movement certificates, we are no longer showing sheep favouritism. Waybills are now ANIMAL movement certificates as opposed to SHEEP MOVEMENT certificates, which means you can fill them in for any sort of animal you wish to move off your farm.

To comply with the implementation of the new Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 2006, the Falkland Islands Code of Practice now requires us to fill in movement certificates for cattle and pig movements as well as sheep. Certainly for animals coming to the abattoir (i.e. for human consumption), movement information is very important for disease traceability. Also, optimistically, we are considering a time when we may get EU approval for beef exports also, so traceability information is essential. For those of you sending pigs to the abattoir also please remember to fill in some paperwork.

Can I remind everyone that movement information should be supplied for all sheep, pigs and cattle movements anywhere (i.e. between farms) not just for animals coming for slaughter.

Currently we will not be asking you to fill in certificates for equine movements unless they are coming for human consumption!!

If you do not have a pad of Animal Movement Certificates please contact the Vet Dept on 27366.

FITZROY SHEEP SHOW

The Fitzroy Sheep Show will take place on Saturday 14th April. There will also be six or seven stalls selling Falklands produce and crafts on the day.

The show will start at 10am lasting until 3pm, with the prize giving taking place at 2pm.

| | |
|----------|---|
| Class 1 | Mature ram over 24 months |
| Class 2 | Shearling ram over 12 & less than 24 months of age |
| Class 3 | Ram hogget less than 12 months of age |
| Class 4 | Mature ewe over 24 months of age |
| Class 5 | Shearling ewe over 12 months & under 24 months of age |
| Class 6 | Ewe hogget under 12 months of age |
| Class 7 | Pen of three flock hoggets (male or female) under 12 months of age |
| Class 8 | Pen of three flock shearlings (male or female) over 12 & under 24 months of age |
| Class 9 | Ram of any age suitable for producing prime lamb |
| Class 10 | Ewe of any age suitable for producing prime lambs. |
| Class 11 | Pen of three weaner prime lambs |
| Class 12 | Under sixteen open entry |

For more information, please contact SeAled PR

FARMING IN THE FALKLANDS WORKSHOPS (PLANT – SOIL – ANIMAL INTERACTIONS)

By Neil Judd

A series of DOA workshops are planned during late April and early May 2007. The 2-day workshops will investigate the basic building blocks of farming and how they relate to Falkland Islands production. The workshops will combine world best knowledge mixed with local, practical experience. They will aim to review the processes that drive farming; namely the interactions between plants, soil and animals.

It is hoped that farmers interested in progressing the profitability, productivity and sustainability of their farms will be able to attend one of the workshops. The workshops will blend a mix of information, discussion and hands-on activity to ensure that outcomes are meaningful and relevant to all of those who take part.

Workshops will be conducted by Jim Gerrish from Idaho, USA. Jim is widely recognised as a world leader in the field of whole farm grazing management, education and research.

Through the informal, interactive workshops, Jim, farmers and DOA staff will explore all of the key factors that make up the Falkland Islands farming systems, to discuss productivity features (good and bad) and also income generated. The focus will then shift to exploring cost effective opportunities for improvement.

All options that are currently used to improve performance on farms will be investigated, including;

- Re-seeding
- Native pasture management
- Forage crops
- Animal Supplementation
- Hay & silage

- Set stocking
- Managed grazing
- Fencing options

The content of the workshop is of critical importance to all farmers in the Falkland Islands involved in grass based livestock systems including beef production, wool production and sheep meat production.

Workshop Dates & Venues

1 – **Port Howard**. Tuesday 24th & Wednesday 25th April

2 – **Fox Bay**. Thursday 26th & Friday 27th April

3 – **San Carlos**. Monday 30th April & Tuesday 1st May

4 – **Stanley**. Wednesday 2nd & Thursday 3rd May

As workshop dates get closer, further details will be provided. For catering purposes, people are asked to advise Siân Ferguson (telephone 27355 or email sferguson@doa.gov.fk) which workshops they hope to attend.

Please do not hesitate to contact Neil Judd, Andrew Pollard or Peter Johnson at the Department of Agriculture if you have any questions or require further information about the workshops.

JIM GERRISH BIOGRAPHY

Jim Gerrish is an independent grazing lands consultant providing service to farmers and ranchers on both private and public lands across the US. He currently lives in the Pahsimeroi Valley in central Idaho and works with numerous ranchers in the Intermountain West using both irrigated pastures and native rangeland.

He received a BS in Agronomy from the University of Illinois and an MS in Crop Ecology from University of Kentucky. His past experience includes over 20 years of beef-forage systems research and outreach while on the faculty of the University of Missouri, as well as 20 years of commercial cattle and sheep production on his family farm in northern Missouri. The University of Missouri Forage Systems Research Center (FSRC) rose to national prominence as a result of his research leadership.

His research encompassed many aspects of plant-soil-animal interactions and provided a foundation for many of the basic principles of Management-intensive Grazing. He currently writes regular columns in BEEF Magazine and The Stockman Grass-Farmer. His book "Management-intensive Grazing: The Grassroots of Grass Farming" is one of the best sellers on the SGF bookshelf.

Jim was co-founder of the very popular 3-day grazing management workshop program at FSRC. These schools were attended by over 3000 producers and educators from 39 states and 4 Canadian provinces from their inception in 1990 through to 2003. Fifteen other states have conducted grazing workshops based on the Missouri model and Jim has taught in eleven of these states.

He is an instructor in the University of Idaho's Lost River Grazing Academy held twice annually near Salmon ID. He typically speaks at 30 to 40 producer oriented workshops,

seminars, and field days around the US and Canada each year. For the 24 years he spent in Missouri, he stayed in touch with the real world on a commercial cow-calf and contract grazing operation. He was deeply involved in the Green Hills Farm Project, a grassroots producer group centered in north-central Missouri and emphasizing sustainability of family farms.

His research and outreach efforts have been recognized with awards from the American Forage and Grassland Council, Missouri Forage and Grassland Council, National Center for Appropriate Technology, USDA-NRCS, the Soil and Water Conservation Society, Progressive Farmer, and American Agricultural Editors Association.

REPLACEMENT ANIMAL MOVEMENT CERTIFICATES

All farmers should by now have received their new 'ANIMAL MOVEMENT CERTIFICATE' books – these are to replace the old 'WAYBILL' books.

Can you now please dispose of any old Waybill books you have left over as these are no longer acceptable for use either with animals travelling to the abattoir, or for sheep moving between farms.

Should you have any queries regarding the above, or if you have not received a new Animal Movement Certificate book, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you, Sarah.

SMALL BUT SUCCESSFUL RAM SALE

By Siân Ferguson and Lucy Ellis

The Department of Agriculture's Saladero Ram Sale was a small but successful affair this year, attracting over 70 people from around the Islands and more than 150 sheep.

The day officially started at 8am for viewing of all sale stock. The BBQ was fired up for breakfast and the final preparations taken care of. The last of the exhibition and sale sheep were allocated their pens when farmers from the West arrived after coming across the Sound via the Tamar on the day. Farmers had plenty of time to inspect sale sheep before the auction started.

Following thorough sheep inspection, the purchase of National Stud Flock Polwarth, Corriedale Shearling Rams and Poll Dorset Shearling Ewes started late morning with Peter Johnson directing the Helmsman auction, ably assisted by Siân and Nyree. Sixteen farms participated in the bidding, which lasted over an hour. The of remaining NSF Polwarth rams were allocated using Pasture Improvement Programme funds.

Everyone seemed pleased with the overall condition and quality of the animals presented. The top bid of the day was £250 on a Polwarth shearling ram. The number of animals

available for sale was lower than last year, however numbers available are considered “normal” considering that last years sale included a lot of ET animals of new dual purpose genetics. 65 Polwarth rams were sold, averaging £70 each and the 13 Corriedales sold brought an average price of £38.

Farmers also had the opportunity throughout the day to sell their own sheep. This opportunity has been taken up by an increasing number of farmers over the last couple of years. Farmers are using the occasion to sell their own high quality animals to a gathering of keen and motivated buyers. The DOA hopes to further develop the occasion as a venue to sell privately owned breeding stock.

A small number of exhibition sheep were also brought along to the Goose Green sale, giving people the chance to view the MPM’s from West Lagoons, the Elite Stud Rams from Saladero, also the Stud Rams from the National Corriedale Stud flock and a small number of Poll Dorsets belonging to Neil McKay.

The DOA would like to thank everyone who helped to make the Ram Sale such a success through display of sheep, attendance to purchase rams or simply to view what has been going on at the stud flocks over the last year, we hope that you agree with our feeling that considerable progress is being made!

Particular thanks are expressed to Brian and his team at Goose Green for their assistance and use of the shearing shed and stock truck, the Tamar crew for ferrying farmers and sheep across the Sound and to Port Howard farm for making their facilities available for farmers from the West to move their purchases.

SIMULATED GRAZING TRIALS UPDATE

By Andrew Pollard

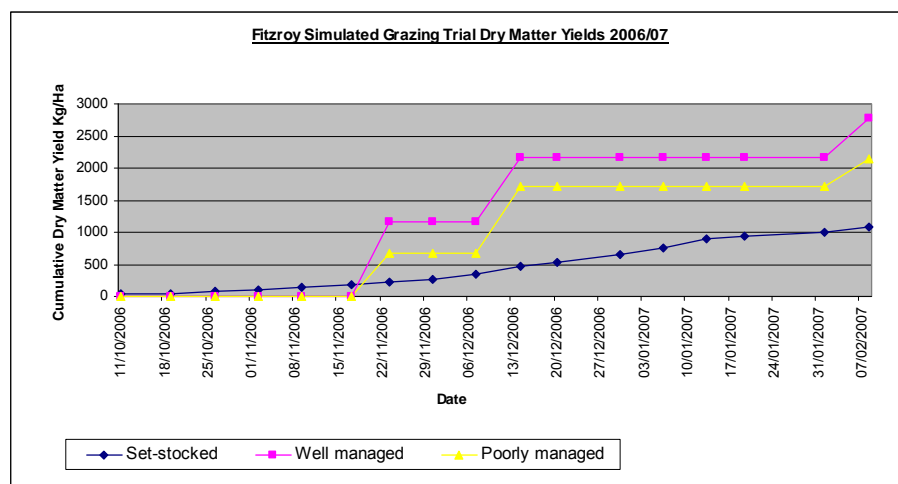
In December 2004 the Department of Agriculture established a series of “Simulated Grazing Trials”. The key objectives of the trials were:-

- 1. To determine if a model of managed grazing systems (graze and spell) produced more pasture than a traditional set-stocked system.**
- 2. To allow calculations to be made to determine if the increased yield of feed was cost effective.**

The trials looked at 3 “models” of grazing management:

- **Set-stocked** - plots are cut on a weekly basis (back to a height of 3cm) during the growing season.
- **Well managed grazing** - plots are mown (back to a height of 4.5cm) when the plants reached a stage deemed as optimum for pasture yield and quality (cut several times during the growing season).
- **Poorly managed grazing** - plots are mown (back to a height of 6cm) when the plants had “over matured” and were losing quality, theoretically represents a grazing system better than set-stocking but poorer than well managed grazing (cut several times during the growing season).

2006/07 Results from the Fitzroy Site



Note:- the set-stocked treatment has been cut 17 times so far between October 2006 and February 2007, while the two managed grazing treatments have each been cut 3 times.

Results show that in the set-stocked plots; weekly yields of plant dry matter have been fairly consistent, peaking in the December/January period. Since the middle of January weekly yields have reduced.

In the managed grazing plots, cutting dates are shown by the steep rises between weeks. The chart shows that rate of growth peaked between the 22nd November and the 13th December. During this period of approximately 21 days both "models" produced over 1 tonne of dry matter per hectare (48 kg/day/Ha), this is a large proportion of the yield to date, as can be seen in the table below.

| 2006/07 (Early Oct – Early Feb) | Set Stocked | Well Managed Grazing | % Change Over Set Stocked | Poorly Managed Grazing | % Change Over Set Stocked |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Dry Matter Yield (Kg/Ha) | 1072 | 2777 | 259 | 2147 | 200 |
| Predicted annual stocking rate (DSE/Ha)* | 2.94 | 7.61 | | 5.88 | |

Note: - a 40 to 45 kg wether will eat approximately 1 kg of dry matter per day (represents 1x DSE), hence 1DSE equals a sheep that would eat approximately 365 kg dry matter per year.

The table above clearly illustrates the amount of extra pasture that can be grown from well managed grazing of pastures.

Question...would all types of pasture achieve the same level of response to a changed grazing management system? The answer of course is no.

Question...would you expect the yields of different types of pasture to follow a similar pattern within the 3 grazing management levels? I believe the answer to be yes.

The reasoning for this requires an explanation/understanding of the biology of pasture growth. Constant defoliation of grasses (set-stocking) reduces the plants amount of “green material” (photosynthetic potential and hence “growing power”). The function of this “green material” is to trap sunlight, utilising it to make the necessary food available for plant growth. When a plant is unable to photosynthesise it relies upon its root reserves to grow, weakening the plant. When the plant is once again able to photosynthesise, its immediate focus has to be on replenishing its root reserves, as a result leaf growth is slow.

Over time, constant grazing pressure can lead to plant death, particularly of the most desirable species (i.e. those preferred by animals). Could this be the reason for encroachment of Christmas bush on some older reseeds or for the loss of clover in others or maybe why tussac and fascine disappear when continuously grazed?

In much the same way that overgrazing has a potentially serious impact on the most desirable plant species in a pasture, under grazing can also lead to loss of yield and quality. Under grazing can cause plants to become more “stemmy” and set seed. This is evident from the poorly managed grazing plots, 2.8 versus 2.1 tonnes of dry matter per hectare.

These results could of course be argued as applying only to 2006/07 season, so the table below compares results from the 2005/06 growing season as well:-

| 2005/06 (Mid Oct – Mid Apr) | Set Stocking | Well Managed Grazing | Poorly Managed Grazing |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Dry Matter Yield (Kg/Ha) | 688 | 1851 | 1605 |
| Annual Stocking Rate (DSE/Ha) | 1.88 | 5.07 | 4.40 |

Although yields were lower than 2006/07 season, trends were similar. The well managed grazing plots produced the highest pasture yields. Earlier in the article we discussed the negative effect of set-stocking on root growth. The increase in dry matter yield as seen in the 2006/07 season could possibly be attributed to the development of a better root structure over time (ie from two years of improved management!). Improved root development, in particularly with the “turf” species would be expected over time from well managed grazing.

After discussing these results recently with a farmer, it was quickly pointed out that stock do not graze the pasture in the same way as a lawn mower cuts it (valid point).

It is essential in grazing management to view pasture management through an individual plant as well as the “whole” pasture. Animals are selective grazers; they will always prefer white clover to Yorkshire fog or indeed to whitegrass. You could move the animals on as soon as they have grazed the white clover down to a pre-determined level. This means that the Yorkshire fog is never grazed!

This is where managed grazing is essential. How can the level of selective grazing in pastures be reduced to create a positive change in the plants without affecting the animal performance?

The only real answer is sub-division of camps and a higher level of stock contact/management. It is suggested that the best place to start such a process of sub-division and more intensive stock management is on the best ground where the cost benefit of the activity will be greatest. As time progresses lower quality areas could then be tackled.

In many situations the highest yield potential areas may be reseeded, valley greens or coastal greens. Sub-dividing camps creates an opportunity to offer rest to the pasture in areas from which stock have been excluded. To then reduce the level of selective grazing, a high stock density (more animals) is needed over a short period of time.

The key issue at this stage is to recognise the delicate balance that needs to be walked between creating a positive change in pasture composition without “crashing” the condition of the animals.

Rotating through the other camps in the sub-division provides rest for the most recently grazed pasture which allows plants to re-grow and regenerate, particularly the “best” species in the camp. Rotation speed is obviously a balance between the number of camps that are available plus existing growth conditions (remembering from earlier that one tonne of dry matter was grown in 21 days during the prime summer growth period!)

Final Thoughts

The results from the Fitzroy simulated Grazing Trial **clearly** show that a higher level of grazing management offers great scope to maximise available pasture and offers considerable potential to either improve individual animal performance or to run more animals (or perhaps to achieve both in the longer term). The trial also demonstrates that potential exists to improve farm profitability.

Many of you may be asking which of the grazing methods are practiced on your farm? (The pictures on the first page of the article may give some indication)

Finally if you are still not convinced, go back to the objective for the simulated grazing trials and try convincing yourself the opposite!

I welcome your thoughts and queries.

Many thanks must be given to Gordon Lennie for collecting the trial data so that this article could be written.

A VETERINARY PERSPECTIVE FROM THE UK

By Steve Pointing

I left the Falkland Islands almost 9 months ago and have only just got around to writing this article having promised Sian that I would produce something before the end of 2006. At the time of writing I am sitting at home on a sunny Spring morning convalescing from an operation a week ago and it seemed like the ideal time to bring you all up to date with what I've been doing on the veterinary front since my return to the UK.

Well we took a month or so to reach the UK having travelled via Ascension and St Helena and then we had to sort out our house for sale prior to looking for something else to either rent or buy nearer to the location where I would be based in Taunton, Somerset. House selling and buying in the UK is not an easy procedure so I think we did pretty well to have

sold one house and bought another by the middle of September. We have ended up buying a brand new property so although the house was in good condition (apart from all the usual brand new teething problems) the garden was completely untouched having previously been a part of a paddock. Our task in the coming year is to turn that ground into a productive veggie plot and attractive garden – at least things grow relatively quickly in the UK's climate and living in Somerset we are unlikely to be short of the necessary rainfall.

I have come back to work for my previous employer – previously called MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) and now called the SVS (State Veterinary Service) an executive agency of DEFRA (the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). Many farmers have come up with other suggestions for the acronym – not all of them very polite! In fact I found out the other day that Defra in Welsh means “Wake up” – perhaps that is telling us something! Perhaps you could have a competition asking for suggestions as to what DoA could stand for other than Department of Agriculture. One suggestion that I frequently heard on my rounds was “Department of Australians” – and that is not meant in any sort of derogatory way.

Well – what is it like working for the SVS? Quick answer – often very frustrating and exasperating. I've always thought that the British civil service was closely modelled on the British armed forces – so for every rank you might have in the army there is a civil service equivalent, and in much the same way that the army operates, those at the top pass down their orders to those below who have to actually carry out the tasks and sometimes (actually quite often) they don't appear to be very sensible or very well thought out (possibly because many of them emanate initially from the EU!) Most of my current work falls into two areas – control of Tuberculosis (TB) and investigating complaints relating to farm animal welfare issues.

On top of this there are many other issues that are dealt with by the SVS – from dealing with outbreaks of exotic disease (the 2 most worrying ones at present in the UK are avian influenza and bluetongue – more about this later), issuing export certification for live animals and animal products, post import checks on live animals that have arrived from other parts of Europe or further afield, and liaising on a regular basis with vets in private practice to ensure that they know what they are expected to do on behalf of the SVS in their capacity as LVI's (licensed veterinary inspectors). That probably covers about 90% of the work but there are lots of other areas which are rather specialised and in which only certain officers are fully competent to carry out the procedures. At present I am dealing mainly with TB breakdowns, animal welfare issues and visiting private veterinary practices on a regular basis to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Tuberculosis (TB)

The TB situation in the UK was bad when I left MAFF in 1998 to come to the Falkland Islands. It is now much worse. Historically it has always been a problem in the western counties of Cornwall, Devon and Gloucestershire but now the areas of previously “clean” ground in between are also succumbing to the disease. Large areas of Somerset and Dorset are now affected as are the Welsh border counties (Hereford, Shropshire, and Gwent) as well as pockets of infection in more isolated areas such as Pembrokeshire and Staffordshire.

MAFF has been trying to control and eventually eradicate the disease since before the Second World War. In the early days (apart from the war years themselves) they had great

success and the incidence of the disease was reduced from almost 50% of dairy cows having the disease to single digit figures by the early 1950's (in much the same way as hydatidosis was reduced dramatically when pilling of dogs was first introduced and the feeding of offal to dogs was banned); since then, however, the fight against the disease has had a rather chequered history.

Some progress seemed to be being made in the late 1990's but the outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease in 2001 had more long-term consequences than just the effects of that disease alone. During the FMD crisis all effort naturally went to eradicating the FMD virus from the nation's livestock as speedily as possible but while this was happening the control of TB was put on the back-burner for a period of almost a year with the result that when it was re-visited in 2002 the disease had spread well beyond its traditional areas.

This begs the question as to how the disease is spread – and the simple answer is that it is mainly spread with the aid of a wildlife vector – namely the badger. Yes, some cattle to cattle spread does occur and this can be relatively easily dealt with but unless the wildlife vector is also tackled then the disease continues to lurk in the undergrowth (literally) to re-emerge at a later date when the cattle are next tested for TB.

Something that used to happen, but sadly no longer is allowed to take place, was that as well as removing infected cattle from a herd badgers in the immediate vicinity of the breakdown farm were also trapped and humanely culled. This process has been put on hold for a number of years now while successive governments have tried to determine whether badgers really are responsible for harbouring and spreading the disease (there is plenty of good scientific evidence from both the UK and Ireland that they are) and how members of the public view a badger culling policy. Not surprisingly, in a country as urban as the UK, with very few people really knowledgeable about countryside matters or interested in the plight of British farming, the great British public is firmly anti- the killing of badgers for whatever reason.

In the meantime the badger population continues to grow exponentially (they are a protected species, the top of their food chain with no natural predators) and alongside their population growth there is a corresponding increase in the number of TB breakdowns. In case you are wondering what happens to the badgers that carry the TB bacillus I should add that most of them eventually die of the disease themselves – usually at the end of a long debilitating illness during which they lose weight and eventually can't feed themselves anymore. This may take a year or more to happen and during this period they are able to infect other badgers within their sett as well as contaminate pastures on which cattle are grazing.

You will see from what I have written above how frustrating it is to visit a farmer with a TB breakdown and not be able to really tackle the problem at its root. All we can do is remove the animals that have reacted to the TB test and keep doing this until there are no more reactors. However, that hasn't solved the problem and both the farmer and visiting veterinary officer know that in subsequent years more reactors will turn up as the underlying wildlife vector has not been dealt with. To me that seems to be trying to deal with a problem with one hand tied behind your back while trying to balance on one leg at the same time. TB is a serious national animal health problem and it needs to be tackled in a serious and sensible way. That just isn't happening under the current set of operating instructions.

Exotic diseases

The 2 exotic diseases (ie diseases not normally present in a particular country) that are of most concern in the UK at present are avian influenza (AI) and bluetongue. You will probably all have read about and seen on the TV the recent outbreak of AI in a turkey farm belonging to Bernard Matthews in Suffolk. That appears to have been dealt with swiftly and effectively and no new cases have subsequently come to light.

The most likely route of infection still appears to have been in turkey products imported from Hungary where there had been an AI outbreak in the early part of 2007. If this is the case it just goes to show how important it is to monitor what is being imported into the country and where it comes from (biosecurity!)

As for bluetongue this still hasn't reached the UK but we will be keeping a very close eye on the situation over the coming months as temperatures begin to rise. Why are temperatures important? This is because this viral disease is spread by biting midges and their numbers increase substantially as the temperature rises. Normally bluetongue is a disease of the tropics, sub-tropics and more recently the Mediterranean region. However, with global warming, the various midge species responsible for spreading the virus have extended their range and for the first time ever last year there were outbreaks of bluetongue in northern Europe – in Holland, Belgium, Germany and France.

Although we can easily prevent the importation of live animals from affected areas we cannot stop the wind blowing from the east or south-east and various epidemiologists expect that the disease could well enter the south of the England in the coming summer with wind-borne midges from the continent. In countries where the disease has been endemic for years bluetongue is mainly a disease of sheep – leading to major mortalities – and cattle are usually unaffected but can act as a reservoir of infection.

However, in the northern European outbreak cattle were the species most affected and they developed clinical signs of the disease and many became seriously ill and subsequently died. Once an accurate diagnosis had been reached all affected herds were culled and there was a period of strict isolation with no movements of unaffected stock allowed into or out of the surveillance zone.

This is an interesting disease but I won't say more here as I will leave it to Vic or Joe to answer any questions you may have. Vic will be well aware of the potential consequences of bluetongue reaching a sheep producing country as Australia has been concerned about this possibility for many years and regularly monitors the cattle population in northern Queensland and the Northern Territory to check for the presence of bluetongue virus that may have come across with midges from nearby Indonesia.

Reading about the various conditions above will make you realise how fortunate you are in the Falkland Islands not to have to deal with animal diseases such as these. It really does pay to keep them out of a country if at all possible and this is where biosecurity at the border is so important. Setting up systems to keep diseases at bay may have a cost implication but in the long run it is a much cheaper option than having to deal with a disease outbreak and all its ramifications.

I think I've probably written more than enough for one article and poor Sian may have difficulty in finding space for this article in the next Wool Press. Although we've been back in the UK for almost 9 months we still think of the Falklands on an almost daily basis and still keep up to date with the local news via the Penguin News on-line (and reading the Wool

Press, of course). If you'd like to make contact with us then contact Sarah or Glynis at the DoA for our actual address or email us at sweap@dst.eclipse.co.uk. We'd love to hear from you. Really – we would!

INTRODUCING THE NEW AGRICULTURAL TRAINEES

From March to June this year, we have two trainees working at the Department of Agriculture, Erica Berntsen and Lucas Berntsen.

LUCAS

Hello everyone, I guess that most of you are now aware that I have recently undertaken one of the positions as trainee agricultural assistant here at the DoA. The main reasons why I decided to apply for this job are, firstly I have always had a keen interest in farming and all aspects of agriculture, secondly I have also spent the majority of my life living and working out and about in camp, so I enjoy doing the jobs I am given, and finally I have always been interested to have a job here at the department.

So a week or so after applying for the job I was lucky enough to be told that I had received one of the two available positions and that I would be starting work here on the 5th of March. Already I have found my time here both very interesting and amusing. So far this month I have been involved in a wide range of activities including repairing cradles for the AI and ET programme, assisting with castrating rams at Walker Creek, weighing trial sheep at Goose Green, to setting up and helping with the recent ram sale, again, at Goose Green.

I have enjoyed my time here so far and I am looking forward to my next few months working here. After I have finished my time here at the department I am hoping to go and work on both our farm and other farms around the area that would like an extra hand, before hopefully joining the shearing gang the season after next. After that I am planning to take over and continue running our farm. Well that's really all I have to say for myself for now so hopefully none of you have fallen asleep while reading this. Andy P your record is at stake!

ERICA

Hello there, as most of you may know, I'm one of the new trainees here at the DOA. The reasons why I applied for this position are: I have always lived on a farm and helped out with the jobs that were going on, and secondly I have always been interested in farming ways and how to improve on things.

I started working here on the 5th of March and already it has been very busy. During my first week I did quite a lot of travelling around the East Falkland, I visited Moss Side, Cape Dolphin and many other places. I also went down to North Arm with Vikki for a day to help do some core testing and we also cored some bales down at FIPASS.

This week has been very hectic because we are setting up the ram sale down at Goose Green which went as well as expected with most of the rams being sold. I had a lovely lunch of homemade beef burgers and Benny kebabs; well I had to do my bit to keep the barbecue afloat!

So far I have really enjoyed my time working here, and have had a lot of fun with the people that I am working with - I think they're fab! I have learnt a lot about the trials and also the reasons for doing them. I am looking forward to working with you in the near future.