



PRISM 2030 FARMER:

DANNY MILLER

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PRISM 2030 farmer Danny Miller runs a suckler beef farm near Wick, Scotland. Danny farms more than 1700ha (4200 acres), of which 1000ha (2471 acres) is marginal land, and is running a total of 1400-1600 cattle during the farm's peak stocking time in July. Danny employs four staff and manages his business so that the farm works for him, not the other way around. A proportion of his 600+ breeding cows are outwintered on a variety of winter forages plus deferred hill grazing, saving 20p-40p/head/day compared to housing cattle away from home.

Danny emphasises the importance of taking time away from the farm to recharge, he also keeps fit and competes in triathlons, so ensures that his farming system creates the time to achieve these goals.

Danny started out with mainly Angus cows when he took over the running of the farm from his father in 1995. Over the past ten years he's introduced Stabiliser genetics and has 20+ Stabiliser breeding bulls along with a couple of Angus and Simmental bulls. The change to Stabiliser was to bring hybrid vigour and reduce mature cow size. Both Angus and Stabiliser are good foragers with favourable temperaments.

Danny says: "We are balancing the size of our breeding females based on desired carcase output and their ability to thrive on available grazing, which we find the current breeding programme is achieving."

Stabiliser heifers are AI'd to Stabiliser female-sexed semen, with some embryos imported to strengthen the herd's genetics. Calves are born outside in April and weaned October to November. To keep on top of cattle health, cows are vaccinated for BVD and Leptospirosis and tested for Johnes. Prime cattle are finished at 14-19 months old either inside on homegrown barley or directly off grass.

Joining PRISM 2030 in late 2022, Danny says: "I'm always looking into better ways of doing things and I'm not afraid to try new things, but I don't want to overcomplicate a straightforward way of working."

Youngstock and finishing cattle are housed over winter, with Danny outwintering as many dry cows as possible, selecting appropriate females based on body condition score and age.



He says: "Outwintering reduces winter costs for that headage by 20-40%. Flexibility is important, cows are regularly checked and if any are not performing outside, those individual cows are brought in."

In 2023, Danny had cows outwintered for 30,000 cow-days (equal to 300 cows for 100 days).

Cattle outwinter on crops of fodder beet, swede and forage rape, these provide excellent nutritional value to cows, and this year Danny has planted 12ha of fodder beet, 12.5ha of kale/swede mix, and roughly 15ha of a kale/swede/hybrid rape mix.

Danny explains: "We use forage crops as a break crop for grassland or arable ground. Paddocks are electric fenced, and we use mobile troughs to keep livestock watered. Cows on winter forages require a source of roughage, we use hay, which is unrolled at the top and bottom of the field. Winter forages vary in yield, frost hardiness, cost, sowing date and transition time. A fodder beet diet will take 10-14 days to transition onto, while kale and hybrid rapes are fine from day one."

To reduce workload of moving break crops over the festive period, some cows will be housed for a couple of weeks before going out when farm staff return. Danny says: "We aim to finish grazing hybrid rape by December and kale by January, as they are not as winter tolerant as fodder beet. Some of our brassica crop is an environmental scheme bird mix, which can only be grazed from 1st March. So, even though the crop isn't perfect by then, biodiversity wins. Around 250 cows will have a month of late season grazing before calving in April and the support payments will bolster our outwintering business model. With any management system, but especially outwintering, you've got to have flexibility, and a plan B. Things can and do go wrong, so being able to adapt quickly is essential for success."

Danny has used cattle electronic identification for more than 20 years as he finds it helpful for data management and minimising the need for paper. Danny has streamlined management of the business, employing reliable staff with a varied skill set, keeping fit, and taking regular breaks and holidays to recharge, are top priorities. He invested his PRISM 2030 Sustainability Grant in electric fencing and pH testing.