

Saltburn Monitor Farm

Meeting title: Farming and wildlife

Date: 12 December 2019

Speakers: Marek Nowakowski, (Wildlife farming), Richard Suddes, (Soil farmer of the year)



Wildlife farming

- Delivering more wildlife and staying in business: “KEEP IT SIMPLE”
- 90% decline in biodiversity is due to habitat loss: PUT THE HABITATS BACK
- Farmland birds starve in winter: FEED THEM
- We've lost 98% of our (pollen and nectar) flowers. Habitat quality and variety are the key to biodiversity increases. Appropriate management is vital.
- 98% of flower meadows are gone. Flowers feed insects that underpin the food chain
- Flower seed depth is critical and it's important to sow at the correct time of year
- Perennial species may need repeated cutting in year one to reduce weeds and growth
NB. Cutting annuals means no seed – dead. Cutting perennials means flowers for next year

Take-home messages

Environmental thoughts for the future:

- Is climate change the new focus?
- Where will ELM sit in the future? (Public goods)
- What environmental values are 5% EFA's?
- Have existing environmental schemes run out of time?
- What are the environmental payments available? Are there sufficient incentives, penalties, training?
- Where will payment by results fit?
- Pesticide vigilance: Prof. Ian Boyd (Defra) is proposing pesticides follow similar rules to the pharmaceutical industry.
- Prof. Dieter Helm (Chair of Natural capital, Defra chief economist) Carbon sequestration.
- £1 billion to ELM; broad and shallow, higher tier, landscape scale. £2 billion to carbon sequestration; forestry, peat soils, wetlands. GHG Emissions.
- Focus now on agriculture not the industry – consider CO₂ & methane, more forestry, grass, peat soils, less livestock?
- George Eustice (Defra): *Make UK the world leader in sustainable pesticide usage. Intensive, extensive, re-wilding.*

Further information

- Farm Wildlife's 6 key elements to helping wildlife on farm can be found at farmwildlife.info
- [The Wildlife Trust](#)
- [Wildlife and countryside link](#)

Conservation agriculture

Richard Suddes

- 800 acre mixed family farm based in County Durham with 500 acres arable at an altitude of 600–1000 ft
- New poultry unit, 120 pedigree Limousin cows; finish all followers, 95% home-fed produce
- Started no-till in 2009
- 400 acre share farming agreement and a further 400 acres direct drilled

Previous establishment practices:

- Glacial till – plough, roll, power harrow, combination drill, roll
- Sandy loam – plough, roll, combination drill, roll

Problems:

- Previous rotation: WW, WW, WB, OSR
- Drill, brome, 2nd wheats
- Glacial till (infiltration rates) incorrect soil chemistry

Soil improvements:

- Straw chopping, muck, gypsum, lime (calcifert)
- Cover crops (limited)

Rotations

- Cereal, break, cereal, break
- 95% winter, but be flexible!

Nitrogen rates

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|
| • Winter wheat | 120 kg N/ha | 4 way split |
| • Winter barley | 120 kg N/ha | 4 way split |
| • Winter oats | 60 kg N/ha | 1 app: 1st May |
| • OSR | 160 kg N/ha | 3 way split |

Trials

- Stale seedbed
- Broadcasting OSR over wheat
- Companion cropping
- Feed foliar applications
- Compost tea
- Sheep grazing wheat

Sowing

- Resistant varieties
- High seed rates
- Early sowing dates
- Home-saved seed

Soil structure

- Travelling improved
- Poor areas shrinking, headlands out-yielding field middles
- Clean water running out of drains
- No mud on wellies
- Even crop establishment

Further information

- [Testing soil health](#)
- [Soil assessment methods](#)
- [Soil health and biology partnership \(91140002\)](#)
- [Using the soil health scorecard case studies](#)
- More information from the GREATsoils programme can be found at ahdb.org.uk/greatsoils

AHDB resources

- Understand your business costs with AHDB's benchmarking tool Farmbench at ahdb.org.uk/farmbench
- Monitoring tools are available at ahdb.org.uk/tools
- Sign up to market information and research newsletters at ahdb.org.uk/keeping-in-touch
- Find out what's going on at other Monitor Farms and Strategic Farms at ahdb.org.uk/farm-excellence
- All AHDB events can be found at ahdb.org.uk/events
- For guidance on how Brexit will impact your business, see ahdb.org.uk/brexit

Contact details

For more information contact: Rose Riby

E: rose.riby@ahdb.org.uk

M: 07741 892 283

 @Cereals_NE