



Monitor Farms

RDPE Northwest Livestock Programme

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The Rural Development Programme for England is supported by:



The European Agricultural
Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas

Monitor Farms, Farmer Groups and Demonstration events

Managed by
Myerscough
College

Delivered

in Cheshire and Merseyside by Reaseheath
College

in Cumbria by the Farmer Network

in Lancashire and Greater Manchester by
Myerscough College

Supported by

EFFP

EBLEX

Dairy Co

**6 monitor
farms -
112
meetings**

**302 farmer
groups
meetings**

**105
demo
events**

**Total
attendances
11,144**

**Total
individual
farmers
4,981**

January 2009 – July 2013



What is a Monitor Farm?



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graph LR; A[Selected by farmers] --> B[Business Improvement plan and identify Key Performance Indicators]; B --> C[Steering group of farmers, monitor farmer, facilitator and specialists work together]; C --> D[Monitor farm group learns from improvements being made on the monitor farm];
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Selected by farmers

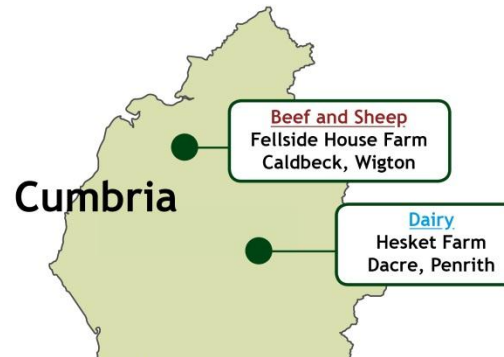
Business Improvement plan and identify Key Performance Indicators

Steering group of farmers, monitor farmer, facilitator and specialists work together

Monitor farm group learns from improvements being made on the monitor farm

RDPE Northwest Livestock Monitor Farms

6 monitor farms
3 dairy
3 beef and sheep



Monitor farm results

Net margin £ per ha
increased by over a third

Calving index reduced
by nearly a month

Concentrate fed per
ewe reduced by 30%

The poster features a central image of a rolling green landscape under a blue sky. At the top, a green banner contains the text 'Livestock NORTH WEST' and 'Monitor Farm Open Days programme'. Below this, the title 'North West Monitor Farms - four years on -' is written in large green letters. The bottom section of the poster is a collage of seven small photographs showing various people, likely farmers and staff, in different settings. At the very bottom, there are logos for 'Myerscough College', 'FARMER NETWORK', 'REASEHEATH COLLEGE', 'Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs', and 'The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development'. A small paragraph of text at the bottom right explains that the project is supported by the Rural Development Programme for England.

Lameness improved –
treatments reduce by 20%

Milk output increased from
25.8 litre per day per cow to
31

Lambs finished before end
August improved by 21%

http://farmnw.co.uk/page/monitor_farms

Benefits to the monitor farm group

Cheshire Beef and Sheep

“The most beneficial thing that has come out of it all is talking to other farmers to get their thinking and see ideas that work in practice.”

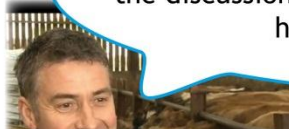
David Norcott,
Mere



Cumbria Dairy

We have changed the ventilation to our cow buildings following the discussions we had at the herd health conference and this has helped in the control of mastitis.

Kevin Beaty, Ivegill



Cheshire Beef and Sheep

Following a grassland meeting we came straight home and dug a hole to see what was down there (for compaction). This then allowed us to make an assessment as what to do to improve our soil structure.

Ann and
Kevin Littler,
Tarpurley



Cumbria Dairy

Workings have showed us that the transition management of cows is important. That creating extra housing and space is worth it. We are now focusing on these cows by looking at the ventilation in our sheds.”

Len Wilson, Skirwith



Lancashire Beef and Sheep

“The grassland (improvement) meetings we’ve done some at home and yields have improved.”

Jeffrey and Ben Hey, Quilley

“The speakers have been fantastic – their knowledge is amazing and to tap into that is great.”

Ray Cousins, Capernwray



Lancashire Dairy

Workings have showed us that the transition management of cows is important. That creating extra housing and space is worth it. We are now focusing on these cows by looking at the ventilation in our sheds.”

Richard and Ian Gorst,
Bay Horse



Best Practice

Co-ordinated development and delivery across the Northwest by local deliverers and good links with other NWLP contractors

Commitment of the monitor farmers and willingness to change farming practices

Communication to wider farming community through ICT Network (website, newsletters and videos)

Range of independent experts

Facilitator Network; training, sharing best practice, and ideas

Lancashire Dairy Monitor Farm

Ben and John Hartley – Mason House



An all grassland farm in a high rainfall area, 121 hectares. 160 pedigree Holstein cows milked through three robots and housed all year



Main aims in 2009 - address concerns about dry cow transition into the milking herd, fertility and the quality of grassland.

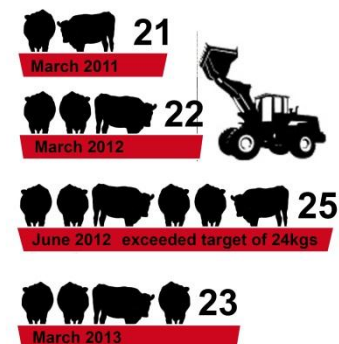
Lancashire Dairy Monitor Farm Achievements

GOALS	KPI	OCT 2009	MAR 2010	MAR 2011	MAR 2012	MAR 2013	TARGET
Increase Milk Yield	Annual average yield per cow (litres)	7,763	7,653	8,491	8,894	9,507	10,000
Reduce Feed Costs	Concentrate cost pence per litre	10.07p	8.17p	6.9p	7.57p	8.55p	8p
Reduce Feed Rate	Feed Rate (kgs per litre)	0.42	0.43	0.31	0.33	0.32	0.32kg
Improve Grass-land and Forage	Annual litres from forage	N/A	1,463	1,010	2,359	1,112	2,500
Improve Milk Output	Litres per day per cow in milk	26	25.8	27.1	31	29.4	30ltrs
Increase Dry Matter Intakes	Kg / day	N/A	N/A	21 kg	22 kg	23 kg	24kg

Milk output target reached



Kgs of dry matter intake increased



Benefits of being a monitor farmer

- Having access to large network of knowledge from industry
- Increased attention to detail and monitoring performance
- Highlighted importance of feeding consistent high quality forage and access to feed
- Better management of dry cows
- Improved grassland management

Cumbria Beef and Sheep Monitor Farm

Ken Pears – Fellside House Farm



Typical hill farm with in by, plus common grazing rights. 50 Limousin x Belgian Blue cows x Limousin bulls, 560 ewes inc. 230 Swaledales



Main aims in 2009 – improve productivity of the sheep flock, breed own heifer replacements. Reducing feed and fertiliser costs.

Cumbria Beef and Sheep Monitor Farm Achievements

Key Performance Indicators	2010	2011	2012
SHEEP ENTERPRISE			
<i>No of ewes at scanning</i>	574	561	569
<i>No of lambs at scanning</i>	859	743	856
<i>Scanning %</i>	150%	132%	150%
<i>% of lambs lost</i>	23%	4%	6%
<i>% of lambs reared</i>	115%	127%	141%
<i>No of lambs sold by August 1st</i>	None	47	50
<i>Volume of concentrate fed to ewes (kg / head)</i>	17.72	15.56	12.32
CATTLE ENTERPRISE			
<i>No of suckler cows in the herd</i>	48	51	53
<i>Calving period</i>	13 wks	11 wks	9 wks
<i>No of heifers kept as replacements</i>	3	6	2
<i>Average weight of suckler calves at weaning</i>	-	354kg	345kg
<i>Average weight of suckler calves at sale</i>	-	422kg	425kg
<i>Average sale price</i>	£763	£809	£915

Calving period reduced by almost a third



Concentrate fed per ewe reduced by 30%

(Total amount used by the flock down from 10 ton to 7 ton)



Benefits of being a monitor farmer

- Advice from consultants resulting in improvements to cattle and sheep enterprises
- Improved monitoring - Analysis of silage and soils, weighing cattle
- Overall farm improvement – breeding own heifer replacements, finishing lambs earlier
- Able to demonstrate good practice to other farmers