THE DEER FARM & PARK
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Day 10 20/11/2015

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

The Scottish Government

The funding is being made available through the SRDP Skills Development Scheme which is jointly funded by the Scottish Government and the European Union

SCOTTISH VENISON

SFQC
Specialist assurance for the food and farming sectors

NFU Scotland

SCOTLAND OF FOOD & DRINK

Feeding Farmed Deer For Profitable Production

Lets compare 2 identical hypothetical deer farms of 100 breeding hinds finishing all progeny as venison at 16 – 18 months

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Big Difference is !

SCOTTISH VENISON

2 completely different farmers!

FARMER B/A (Below Average)

- Same old same old
- Listens to nobody
- Poor pasture manager
- Cuts his silage in late July on a wet Sunday morning when there's nothing on the telly
- Hates spending money on feed

FARMER A/B (Actively Better)

- Innovative
- Takes advice
- Excellent pasture manager
- Cuts his silage when it's leafy on a sunny afternoon in early June and the forecast is right
- Has a feed budget in place and knows how

SCOTTISH VENISON

Here’s the farms in late July

B/A

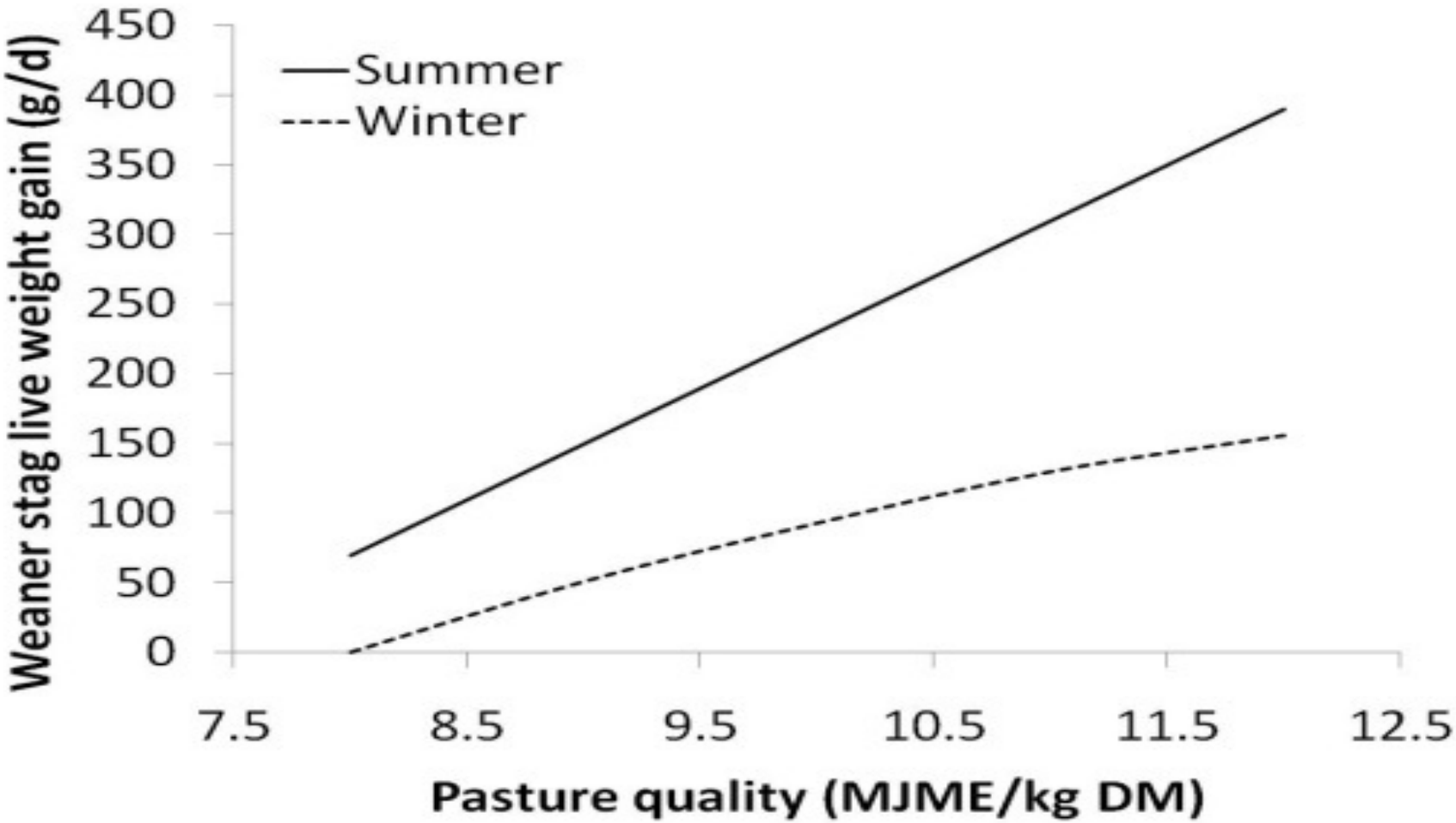
A/B

So what does A/B know that B/A doesn't in terms of pasture management

- Hinds need cover for calving and good quality leafy pasture for lactation
- % of green leaf in pasture affects pre-weaned calf intake (increase from 40% - 80% green leaf in a summer sward can double calf growth rates from 250-500 gms/day)
- Red Clover/Chicory in pasture mix can significantly increase growth rates in young deer

- Grazing behaviour of deer responds to changes in pasture height and mass and quality (optimal pasture quantity increases intake and reduces bite rate)
- Deer will lose condition and have poor growth rates on pastures that are too short and will have poor utilisation of pastures that are too long
- Max level of production at around 8-12 cm pasture height, young leafy sward

- Pasture quality in late summer drops- growth rates are restricted due to seedheads and dead matter (harder to digest)
- Silage aftermaths produce high quality grazing and topping post calving will increase autumn pasture ME (leafy spring grass > 12….poor autumn pasture < 8.5)
- Rotational grazing of yearlings results in higher intakes and growth rates and maintains pasture quality (3 paddock


Weaner stag live weight gain (g/d)
450
400
350
300
250
200
150
100
50
0
Summer
Winter
7.5
8.5
9.5
10.5
11.5
12.5
Pasture quality (MJME/kg DM)

So at weaning

B/A

- Weans in Nov/Dec
- Doesn't feed out until the deer are standing at the gate hungry
- Puts the calves inside with a bale of crap,stalky silage <10 ME and throws half it away once a fortnight into the silage graveyard
- Feeds 250gms barley and some minerals anytime during the day if he is

A/B

- Weans late Sept
- Feeds hinds and calves for 10 days pre-weaning so that the hinds train the calves to eat concentrate
- Has had his silage tested and has allocated the best bales for the calves (11.5 ME) fed to appetite
- Builds calves up to 1kg of conc within 5 days of weaning in split feed

And the rut

B/A

- Puts the stags in on 1st October after watching Kate Humble on lambing live for the 8th time
- Hinds and calves left on poor stalky pasture
- Hinds go downhill from condition score 3.5 – 3
- Calves do 50 gms/day

A/B

- Puts the stags in on 20th-25th Sept
- Has closed up paddocks six weeks earlier to produce high quality pasture to flush hinds
- Hinds go up from condition score 4 – 4.5
- Calves are doing 300-350 gms/day

And the rest of the winter

B/A

- Feeds hinds on the same stemmy silage as the calves in a single feeder on the same spot. (silage graveyard is now marked on the OS map)
- Pulls out stags in late Dec and feeds them a bit of barley
- Hinds struggle to maintain condition score 3 and some drop below

A/B

- Feeds the second quality silage to the hinds- (10.8-11 ME) with access to mineral blocks. Silage fed in several sites to allow all stock access
- Stags in sheltered paddock with best silage and 1.5kg conc
- Assesses body condition in Feb and introduces concentrates at 0.5-0.75kg

Then the spring/summer

B/A

- Hinds are given the run of 3 paddocks with the gates open. No real cover for calves. B/A Likes to wizz round on the bike twice a day to count calves
- Yearlings turned out onto a big paddock for the summer and wormed if they are wormy!
- Some fertiliser left from last year put on the silage fields

A/B

- Hinds are set stocked on paddocks with some natural cover and left pretty much undisturbed for calving
- Yearlings allocated a 3 paddock rotation (one cut for silage) . Wormed at 4 and 10 weeks post turnout
- Fertiliser applied as per soil samples
- Chain harrows some fields

And Autumn

B/A

- Stemmy seedhead pasture everywhere (but there's tons of grass!)
- Yearlings growth rates poor
- Will get round to de-antlering at some point

A/B

- Has topped seedheads and moved hinds and calves onto silage aftermaths.
- Yearlings on 3 paddock rotation doing 250gms/day
- Applies some nitrogen while soil temperatures are good
- De-antlers stags in batches as they harden

So here's the stats

- 80% Weaning
- 5% Mortality
- Mean calving date of 18th June
- Mean birth wt 7.5kg
- Ave weaning wt (Nov) 41kg
- 48kg ave carcass wt for finished stock (stags/hinds)

- 92% Weaning
- 3% Mortality
- Mean calving date of 28th May
- Mean birth wt 9.5kg
- Ave weaning wt (Sept) 53kgs
- 60 kg ave carcass wt for finished stock (stags/hinds)

And the bottom line

B/A

Output

68 yearlings@ 48kg@ £5.40/kg

8 cull hinds @ 60kg@ £3.00/kg

(8 yearling hinds kept as replacements)

£19,065

Feed Cost (£5,137)

(silage@ £26/t Barley@ £120/t)

A/B

Output

82 yearlings@ 60kg@ £5.40

8 cull hinds@ 60kg@ £3.00/kg

(8 yearling hinds kept as replacements)

£28,008

Feed Cost (£8,713)

(silage@£26/t conc @ £240/t

Margin **£19,295**

In Summary
Feed your deer well and they will return dividends!

A/B invested **£3,576** more on feed than B/A
(and paid attention to detail with everything)

A/B's margin was **£5,367** better than B/A's

That's a 150% return on investment in 6 months