

THE MAGAZINE FOR FARMERS & GROWERS IN WALES

# FARMING connect

**Growing the business with  
horticulture-based tourism**

**Rearing Healthy Calves**  
Why it's essential to cover all bases



Ariennir gan  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
Funded by  
**Welsh Government**

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For more information please visit the Farming Connect website.



For more details about any of the Our Farms projects, click the following link.








# OUR FARMS

## Farm Walks - September 2024

As this will be our last Technical Publication for 2024, we wish to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to those who have turned out to one or more of the *Our Farms - Farm Walks* this year. It has been fantastic to see so many of you across Wales on the farm walks, seeing and hearing first-hand about the on-farm trial work that has been taking place under the Farming Connect Our Farms Network. If you have attended, we hope that you have enjoyed as much as we have and gained new information or picked up a new idea to take home to try on your own farms.



If you were unable to join us for one of the Our Farms-Farm Walks or maybe want to delve further into the projects, there will be an opportunity later on in the year to visit a farm that is part of the Our Farms network to hear more about the results of other on-farm trials taking place on the following topics:

Sector	When	Topic	Location
	13/02/25 11:00 - 14:00	The use of genomics in a spring calving herd to reduce replacement costs	Rhydeden, Llangernyw, Conwy, LL22 8RS
	12/02/25 19:30 - 20:30	The challenges and opportunities to protect and enhance the environment for a dairy farm in the Tywi catchment area	Online
	13/03/25 11:00 - 14:00	Assessing the impact of improved lameness detection on lameness prevalence and lesion incidence	Moreton Farm, Ruabon, Wrexham, LL13 0YH
	23/01/25 13:00 - 15:00	Understanding the benefits of growing a cereal and legume mix as a complete feed	Gelli Goll, Cowbridge, CF71 7RW
	05/03/25 11:00 - 14:00	Assessing soil health and compaction following a wet 2024	Nant y Fran, Amlwch, Anglesey, LL68 0UF

*We look forward to seeing you on a Farming Connect Our Farms farm again soon.*



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OUR FARMS

# GROWING THE BUSINESS WITH HORTICULTURE-BASED TOURISM

Whether it's developing a pick your own business or building a tourist attraction around a seasonal horticulture venture, there are a number of opportunities to diversify into the horticulture tourism sector. Many diversification options can fit into an existing farm model to provide an additional income for the business.

## **Diversifying into Pick-Your-Own Pumpkins**

Lower House Farm occupies 114 acres at the bottom of the Wentwood Hills in Llanfair Discoed, Monmouthshire. Historically a dairy farm, it is now being used for mixed livestock mostly calf rearing and breeding ewes. The Monmouthshire County Council farm is run and managed by Matt Brooks and Laura Pollock, new entrant farmers looking to diversify the business in a number of different directions. In addition to the above, they have other animals including highland cows, belted galloway, goats, sheep, chickens and pigs for local engagement and enhancing people's awareness and appreciation for agriculture and food production in Wales.

*Matt Brooks and Laura Pollock - Lower House Farm*



As part of the Farming Connect Our Farms network, Lower House Farm have dedicated 1.5 acres to trial a pick-your-own pumpkin venture this season. The trial is comparing different methods of propagation against plant establishment, trialling different pumpkin and squash varieties, and exploring value added tourism for open days on the farm. With no prior horticulture experience Laura and Matt have embraced the challenge of growing pumpkins for the first time and are predicted to generate £7,000 during the two-week period leading up to Halloween.

[Click here to follow the progress of the trial.](#)

### Where to begin with horticulture-based tourism

From a practical perspective, a good starting point is to arrange a soil analysis to understand what will grow well on the farm. Taking into consideration the aspect, landscape and infrastructure on site, suitable horticulture ventures can be explored.

If time and labour is a barrier to diversification, setting up a pick-your-own (PYO) venture may be a viable opportunity to fit in with the existing business model. Popular PYO options include soft fruit, flowers, pumpkins, Christmas trees, cut flowers and vegetables. Destination attractions such as sunflower and lavender fields are also increasing in popularity. These ventures create options for a secondary sales market, selling produce direct to market through restaurants, florists and other retailers.

Land availability may dictate which route to choose, as well as timescale. Christmas trees take seven years to grow to maturity where as many other PYO crops are annuals, providing a more immediate income. Many crops require rotating which will dictate the amount of land required over a longer period of time. For example, strawberry crops need rotating approximately every 3 years to reduce pressure from disease and maintain soil health. This additional land will need accounting for from the outset. Other considerations from a land perspective include weeding commitments and machinery requirements.

### Value added opportunities

Horticulture-based tourism can increase footfall to generate additional income through existing or alternative outlets such as a farm shop, café, courses or events. PYO ventures can also increase income potential by including tourist attractions such as reindeers and a Santa's grotto on a Christmas tree farm or Halloween activities and refreshments at a pumpkin PYO.

### Access and facilities

The farm's proximity to a well-maintained or main road is essential for attracting tourists to the destination. Where possible it is advised to have a one-way traffic management system on the farm to limit congestion and the impact on neighbouring farms and roads. Online booking systems are a great way of managing visitor numbers and traffic flow, and having additional staff or volunteers available during opening hours is an asset. Adequate space for car parking will need to be accounted for as well as toilet facilities.

Other considerations when increasing tourism to the farm include appropriate insurances, health and safety standards and food hygiene certification if catering is part of the operation.

Farming Connect is available to support farmers considering diversification. Please get in touch with [hannah.norman@mentera.cymru](mailto:hannah.norman@mentera.cymru) / **07497 368 476** for further details.





## Improving Nitrogen Use Efficiency by increasing white clover content of grass swards

This project investigates white clover, a legume that offers a route to potential savings on the major input cost of Nitrogen fertiliser on a grassland farm. With nitrogen-fixing bacteria contained in root nodules, atmospheric nitrogen is captured and converted into a plant-usable form, which can potentially replace up to 150 kg/ha of synthetic fertilisers. White clover also boasts the highest digestibility of common grassland plants together with a high crude protein content, resulting in increased quality pastures for grazing animals.

### What was done

At Rhyd y Gofaint, two fields (*Cae Ysgol & Cae Bargoed*) were overseeded with white clover in early June using an Erth Agriseeder drill (*Figure 1.*) Two different clover treatments were sown:

1. standard white clover blend
2. new hybrid clover that produces both stolons and underground rhizomes.

Both varieties were drilled at 2kg/acre and in each field a control strip was left with no clover drilled.

Both fields were cut for silage prior to drilling due to surplus grass for grazing. The clover was drilled in a single pass along with slug pellets. Both fields were grazed shortly after drilling and the grazing round was shortened down to around 20 days to reduce competition from the grass.

With a high seed rate of 2kg/acre, 700 seeds per m<sup>2</sup> were drilled as the establishment had to contend with peak grass growth and significant slug pressures.



Figure 1. Erth Agriseeder drill in action

## Establishment results

In August, clover plant counts were taken from each of the fields and treatments (Figure 2) and in late September a visual assessment of white clover ground cover was made (Table 1).

The clovers have established well in both fields, although establishment was more successful in Cae Bargoed, possibly due to the lower grass covers at drilling. This has carried through to producing higher ground cover scores in late September. To have all plots above 10% clover cover in its establishment year is a really good start to the project and should keep building next year. Currently there is no significant difference between the two varieties used, although this might be expected as the hybrid clover is unlikely to develop its rhizomes until next year.

The clover establishment is very much reduced in the wetter areas of each field. With damper soils there can be a tendency for deeper drilling or the drill slot can smear slightly; both of which will limit successful germination. The wetter areas also tend to have greater levels of creeping bent grass which is prone to smother the new seedlings.



Figure 2. Visual clover plant count

Table 1. Sward count results

	Cae Ysgol			Cae Bargoed		
	AberDairy	AberLasting	Control	AberDairy	AberLasting	Control
Aug plant count/m <sup>2</sup>	85	65	3	135	170	6
Sept ground cover %	10	12	1	18	15	1

## WINTER MANAGEMENT

Crucial to maintaining higher clover contents next year will be protecting the young plants this winter.

1. Late season cattle grazing will be light, especially if ground conditions continue to be wet
2. Sheep grazing will be rotational rather than set-stocked; if they stay in a paddock for more than a few days they can start to select the clover plants and graze them out
3. Spring nitrogen applications will be no more than 30kgN/ha and early spring covers kept below 2500kgDM/ha.



## Crimped peas and beans as a protein source for pregnant ewes

Peas and beans can be used in ruminant diets as a useful source of energy and protein. Peas and beans on average contain around 26% protein in the dry matter. They are both high in energy, containing 13.6 to 14 MJ/kgDM and provide an excellent source of starch too. For the purposes of this trial crimped peas and beans were purchased from another farm.

### What was done

180 ewes were selected from the flock and six groups of approximately 30 twin bearing ewes were allocated to one of two dietary treatments:

1. Standard diet - TMR based on grass silage, maize and a 50% crude protein concentrate
2. Peas and beans - TMR based on grass silage, maize and crimped peas and beans

### TMR diet - Standard

Standard diet		Weeks before lambing			
	Kg/head/day	7	5	3	1
Twins	Silage	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.5
	Maize	0.15	0.15	0.3	0.5
	Agrii Combi pro (50%CP)	0.10	0.15	0.15	0.15

Three groups of 30 ewes were allocated to each treatment and were housed on opposite sides of the same shed.

The majority of the ewes and lambs were turned out to grass within 36 hours of lambing. All sheep were grazing on the same fields. The weather was challenging through lambing and early lactation with many wet and cold days and a number of lambs succumbed to joint ill.

### TMR Rations

The silage, peas and beans were analysed to form the below diets for both groups. Diets were designed to deliver the same amount of Metabolisable Energy and Metabolisable Protein.



Crimped peas and beans



One group of the ewes in the shed

## TMR diet - Peas and beans

Peas and beans		Weeks before lambing			
	Kg/head/day	7	5	3	1
Twins	Silage	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.5
	Maize	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.35
	Peas/beans	0.15	0.25	0.30	0.30
	Agrii Superstock 40	-	0.03	0.05	0.05

Ewes received 25g of mineral per head/day on both diets.

Total estimated feed cost per ewe for the 7 weeks prior to lambing was £14.25 on the standard diet and £13.90 on the pea and bean ration.

### Animal performance

Lambing started on 5 March 2024. All Brix colostrum readings taken for both groups were above the recommended level of 26.

### Liveweight gains for all lambs reared to 10 to 13 weeks

	Standard diet	Peas and beans
DLWG (g/day) all lambs	0.234 (n=145)	0.275 (n=121)
DLWG (g/day) ewe lambs	0.248 (n=84)	0.274 (n=65)
DLWG (g/day) ram lambs	0.253 (n=61)	0.283 (n=56)

There was a significant difference in DLWG between the treatments with lambs growing at about 40g/day faster when born to mothers that were fed peas and beans rather than the standard concentrate mix.

## CONCLUSIONS

This pilot trial has demonstrated that crimped peas and beans can be successfully used in TMR diets for pregnant ewes with an advantage to the pea and bean diet in the order of 40g DLWG/lamb per day. This amounts to additional weight of about 2.8 kgLW over 10 weeks, which at current prices (SQQ of 654.50p/kgDW 7/9/24) is worth £8.61, with these lambs also leaving the farm earlier and releasing grazing for ewes.



# TRY-OUT FUND

## Farming Connect Try Out Fund Helps Farmers Improve Lamb Performance and Sustainability

A project by David & Will Lewis, Treforgan, Llandrindod Wells, has been awarded funding through the Farming Connect Try Out Fund. The project, titled “Comparing lamb performance on different leys,” is one of 17 projects chosen across Wales to address specific challenges and opportunities faced by farmers.

The project aims to identify the most effective ley composition for maximising lamb performance post weaning. The project will compare lamb daily liveweight gain (DLWG) and faecal egg counts (FEC) across three different ley types: multispecies leys, high sugar grass leys, and perennial ryegrass leys.

The leys were established last year on three fields which have been historically managed similarly. A cut of silage has been taken and yields recorded. Groups of weaned lambs have been introduced to the silage aftermath and their performance will be monitored and recorded with EID technology. Data on lamb weight, FEC, silage yield, and other factors will be collected and analysed throughout the project.

“This is a great example of how farmers in Wales are embracing technology and sustainable practices,” said Lisa Roberts, Farming Connect Red Meat Sector Manager. “By investigating the impact of different leys on lamb performance, David and Will are not only aiming to improve their own farm’s efficiency but also contribute valuable knowledge to the wider agricultural community.”

A final project report will be available on the Farming Connect website next year. Keep an eye out for more on this project and other try out fund projects.



David Lewis - Treforgan



# TRY-OUT FUND

## Try Out Fund' aims to find an effective biological control against the nemesis of strawberry growers

A Welsh soft fruit grower who once lost his entire strawberry harvest to an insect pest is establishing colonies of a predatory bug in the crop before and during the flowering stage in a bid to find an effective biological control alternative to spraying with an insecticide.

Western flower thrips (WFT) and several other thrips species, are the nemesis of strawberry growers and no more so than at Bellis Brothers at Holt, near Wrexham, where thrips wiped out a crop worth £25,000 three years ago.

With funding from the Farming Connect 'Try Out Fund' and expert guidance from entomologists at ADAS, manager Adrian Marks is experimenting with *Orius laevigatus*, a predatory bug that feeds on thrips. To support the *Orius* population, he has planted alyssum, a companion crop that attracts thrips and provides a food source for the bugs.

"The strategy is to release the *Orius* predators onto the alyssum before the strawberries flower," explained Adrian. "This allows the bugs to establish and build up their numbers before the thrips invade the strawberry plants."

As the strawberries begin to bloom, the hope is that the *Orius* will move onto the plants and control the thrips population, preventing them from damaging the fruit.

Farming Connect horticulture sector officer Hannah Norman said the results of the trial at Bellis Brothers will be shared with other growers once the project concludes.

The Try Out Fund allows growers and farmers the opportunity to be innovative and trial different ways of doing things, she added.



Adrian Marks and Hannah Norman



# TRY-OUT FUND

## West Wales Farm Boosting Sustainability and Reducing Feed Costs through Farming Connect Try Out Fund

Llyr Griffiths, from Tafarn y Bugail in Llangoedmor, Ceredigion aims to improve the farm's sustainability and reduce reliance on purchased feed for his 400-cow dairy herd by companion cropping maize with sunflowers, as part of the Farming Connect Try Out Fund program.

The project will explore the viability of growing sunflowers alongside maize as a companion crop. Sunflowers offer a higher protein content than maize, potentially reducing the need for expensive bought-in protein sources like soya. Additionally, Westerwolds ryegrass will be sown directly after the maize harvest to minimise soil erosion and provide valuable winter forage.

The project aims to investigate the effectiveness of sunflowers as a companion crop to maize in boosting protein content for dairy cows and demonstrate the feasibility of growing sunflowers in West Wales' climate. Other targets include utilising Westerwolds ryegrass to prevent soil erosion during

winter and provide high-quality winter feed and reducing reliance on purchased feed and potentially reducing overall feed costs.

The project commenced in May 2024 and will conclude in February 2025, with a full report to follow. Key milestones include planting the maize and sunflowers, monitoring crop growth, harvesting, analysing feed value, and evaluating the economic and environmental impact.

Llyr Griffiths said, "We are excited to embark on this innovative project and explore ways to enhance our farm's sustainability while potentially reducing feed costs. We believe this approach can benefit both our business and the environment."

Lawrence Couzens, the farm's agronomist, adds, "This project holds significant promise for Welsh dairy farmers. By growing a protein-rich companion crop and utilising Westerwolds ryegrass, we can potentially create a more sustainable and cost-effective feed strategy."



*Llyr Griffiths with rolled field and sunflower seed*

# TRY-OUT FUND



## Nut trial looks at viability of producing walnuts in Wales

**A Carmarthenshire couple are experimenting with growing nuts on their land.**

Martyn Williams and Alison Harwood have planted walnut and sweet chestnut trees on a one-hectare south facing slope overlooking the River Towy at Old Castle Farm, Llangain.

Nuts are being grown commercially more than ever in the UK as the climate heats, making products more economically viable, but what is less understood is how well suited this enterprise is to weather conditions in west Wales, or the free-draining and slightly acidic loam soils at Old Castle Farm.

To examine this, Martyn and Alison have been awarded funding from Farming Connect's 'Try Out Fund', an initiative that makes money available to individuals and groups of farmers and growers to experiment with ideas and bring them to life.

They have planted 20 walnut trees and 20 sweet chestnut trees, varieties selected for growth characteristics matched to the latitude in this region.

Establishment is now being monitored and, to give the trees the best chance to thrive, the area around them is being kept weed-free to prevent competition for nutrients and moisture.

The plan is to explore the use of alternative mulches, such as wool, even shells from a local beach, to balance the soil temperature and retain moisture.

Nut trees are helpful for providing biodiversity on farms but compared to other European regions Wales has a very small economy in food production from trees.

Climate change coupled with proposed changes to the Welsh government farming policy means that alternative types of food production need to be investigated.

It is likely to be five years before the trees produce any quantity of nuts, if indeed they do, but Martyn says planting trees is as much a legacy for future generations as the pleasure they bring to the current one.



*Martyn Williams and sweet chestnut tree*



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CLASSES

# GENETICS FOR REGENERATIVE GRAZING

- your ticket to business improvement

**Agriculture is forever changing, and now more than ever it is crucial to ensure you have your finger on the pulse to new developments and technologies.**

Regenerative grazing can help farmers reduce input costs and increase productivity. But it is also a step change in how we manage livestock and land. It requires a new way of thinking and a transition period of adaptation.

To make a regenerative grazing system work, we need livestock that can convert forage into meat or milk with little or no supplementary feed and minimal routine medicines. Changing the paddock system or sward composition will only get you part way if you don't also have the right genetics in the herd.

If you are eager to learn more about genetics for regenerative grazing to improve your farm's performance, this Farming Connect workshop with Rob Harvad and Sarah Dugate is just the ticket for you.

Rob is a farmer and ecologist based in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. His cattle genetics operation, Phepson Angus, specialises in pedigree grass-fed organic Aberdeen Angus breeding cattle optimised to live outside and produce meat from grass. Rob uses a system called Holistic Planned Grazing across his diverse pasture to unite financial and ecological gain. He speaks from experience, providing practical insight into how to regenerate landscapes whilst breeding fitter cattle for less money to improve profit per acre.

Sarah is based at New House Farm on the Old Lands Estate. Since taking on the tenancy in spring 2024 she has been using Holistic Planned Grazing to restore the soil and pasture, increasing biodiversity while still producing food. She has worked with Rob Havard at Phepson Angus, and her Angus herd includes traditional

type grass-based Angus and some Phepson genetics specially selected for fertility, forage conversion and calving ease.

**During the workshop you will learn:**

- › What is a low input system
- › How to source the right seed stock for your system
- › The importance of genetics in both grass and cows
- › How to identify productive cattle within the herd
- › Why epigenetics is important in selection in low input systems
- › Using cattle in habitat restoration

**Friday**  
**24th January 2025**

**10:00 - 15:00**

Where:  
**Dingestow, Monmouth**

**MORNING SESSION**

Dingestow Village Hall,  
Dingestow, Monmouthshire NP25 4BE

**AFTERNOON SESSION**

New House Farm,  
Dingestow, Monmouthshire NP25 4EB

For further information or to  
secure your place, please contact  
**[menna.williams@mentera.cymru](mailto:menna.williams@mentera.cymru)**



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# JOIN US FOR AN OVERVIEW OF CARBON MARKETS

The Welsh Government is committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050. It is recognised that every industry including agriculture, has a role to play in reducing the production of greenhouse gas emissions. However, farm businesses are in a unique position, as they can sequester carbon and store it in soils, trees and hedges. Very few other businesses and sectors can do this.

The potential to increase the carbon stored in our soils, as well as in above-ground biomass, such as trees and hedgerows, has been identified as one mechanism towards achieving net zero. As a result, carbon is becoming increasingly valued as something to manage and invest in – and farmers and landowners can expect increased support or demand from various organisations they interact with (e.g. banks, supply chain), as well as private companies to sell their measured carbon credits, where possible. However, caution should be taken when considering this, as some farmers may wish to retain their own carbon credits in order to offset the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions produced on their farm - and once the credits are sold, they cannot be re-used or re-sold.

Have you been wondering more about carbon credit trading but not sure where to start with learning the value of credits before considering carbon markets as an alternative income stream?

Non Williams, Farming Connect's Carbon Specialist Officer, and Anna Sellars, SAC Consulting, have got you covered!

Join Farming Connect for an online introduction to carbon markets, a topic expanding at pace.

During this webinar Non will provide an overview of -

- How farming businesses can calculate their carbon footprint
- Explain the meaning of commonly used terms in relation to carbon foot printing
- How carbon is measured within soils, trees and hedges

Anna's work has been specialising in low carbon and circular economies and emerging carbon markets. During this webinar, Anna will provide an insight into -

- What are carbon markets - the opportunities and risks
- How do they affect farm businesses - on-farm GHG production and carbon sequestration
- What is being done to improve the integrity of carbon markets
- What questions farmers should ask when thinking of selling carbon credits

**Wednesday**  
**4th December 2024**

**19:30 - 20:30**

**For further information or to  
secure your place click here!**

**BOOK HERE**



## Sheep and Goat Keepers

Important changes being introduced to the Annual Inventory.  
The changes you need to be aware of are:

### Change of Inventory Date to 1 December

This year you will need to provide details of Sheep and Goats that you own on the 1 December 2024.

### Move to an Online Annual Inventory

Completing the Annual Inventory from 1 December 2024 will be via the EIDCymru Online System.

**We will no longer send keepers** without an EIDCymru online account **the usual paper form** to complete their inventory.

How to prepare for this change:

### Do you have an EIDCymru Online account?

if the answer is **YES**



No further action is required

if the answer is **NO**



Keepers without an account can complete the inventory via an EIDCymru online portal. Access the support available to help you with this.

### We are here to help

Staff at EIDCymru will help you register for an online account. They are available by telephone **01970 636959** or by email [contact@eidcymru.org](mailto:contact@eidcymru.org)

#### LIVESTOCK MARKET Time: 10:00 - 15:00

<b>02/12 &amp; 09/12</b>	Welshpool	<b>05/12</b>	St Asaph
<b>03/12</b>	Ruthin	<b>06/12 &amp; 13/12</b>	Carmarthen
<b>03/12 &amp; 10/12</b>	Brecon	<b>06/12 &amp; 13/12</b>	Dolgellau
<b>4/12 &amp; 11/12</b>	Raglan		

Take advantage of up to 90%  
contribution available towards

# ANIMAL HEALTH ADVICE AND TESTING

Farming Connect can support  
animal health advice and testing  
with your local vet.

## A health plan tailored to each business may include:

- › A review of routine veterinary treatments
- › Livestock disease profile
- › Benchmark and identify areas for improvement
- › Advice on improving the health status of all the animals on the farm
- › Biosecurity measures to reduce the risk of introducing or spreading disease
- › Animal welfare
- › Sampling and testing animals to investigate a possible disorder on the farm

Farmers and vets must  
receive approval from Farming  
Connect before starting work.

Limited funding available.

For more information contact your  
local Development Officer, or call  
the service centre.

 **03456 000 813**

 **[gov.wales/farmingconnect](http://gov.wales/farmingconnect)**

Rydym yn croesawu galwadau'n Gymraeg  
We welcome calls in Welsh



## 'PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE'



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SGILIAU A  
HYFFORDDIANT  
SKILLS AND  
TRAINING

## Maximising returns on your sheep flock

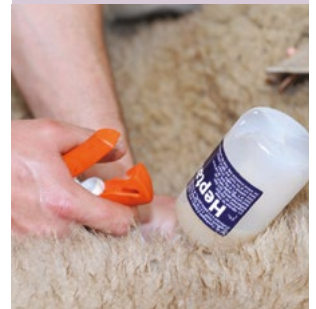
Implementing good animal health and welfare regimes are critical to running a profitable sheep enterprise. If your flock is not achieving its potential in terms of productivity or performance, a Farming Connect short course could help you find the solution.



### Farming Connect training courses include:

- Faecal egg counting
- Grassland management
- Lambing techniques
- Livestock nutrition
- Safe use of sheep dip
- Safe use of vet and med
- Sheep scanning
- Sheep shearing

Ellen Firth, Ruthin  
*“The lambing techniques course was very informative, focusing on the health and nutrition of both ewe and lamb. I learnt the practical side of pulling a lamb correctly.”*



All short courses are delivered by approved training providers and veterinary practices and are subsidised up to 80%. There are also over 100 fully-funded e-learning courses – many specific to animal health and welfare - which you can undertake in your own time, working at your own pace.

### Storfa Sgiliau – recording your achievements



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SGILIAU

- ▣ All training successfully completed – whether through attending in person or by e-learning - will earn you a ‘Certificate of competence’. This will be automatically uploaded to your personal online Farming Connect Storfa Sgiliau record, providing essential accreditation evidence for farm assurance schemes while also helping you keep an up-to-date record of your achievements and identifying any areas where you would benefit from training.

Visit the **Farming Connect** website to find out more and apply for funding.



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SGILIAU A  
HYFFORDDIANT  
SKILLS AND  
TRAINING

## Why CPD could be the soundest investment you'll ever make

Stocks and shares and most other financial investment options can go up or down overnight. They are all high-risk! But there's one investment that guarantees you'll be a winner! If you're ambitious and work in farming, horticulture or forestry, why not invest in your own personal development now to prepare yourself and your business for the economic and environmental demands of the future?

**Work smarter, safer, more sustainably and save money!**

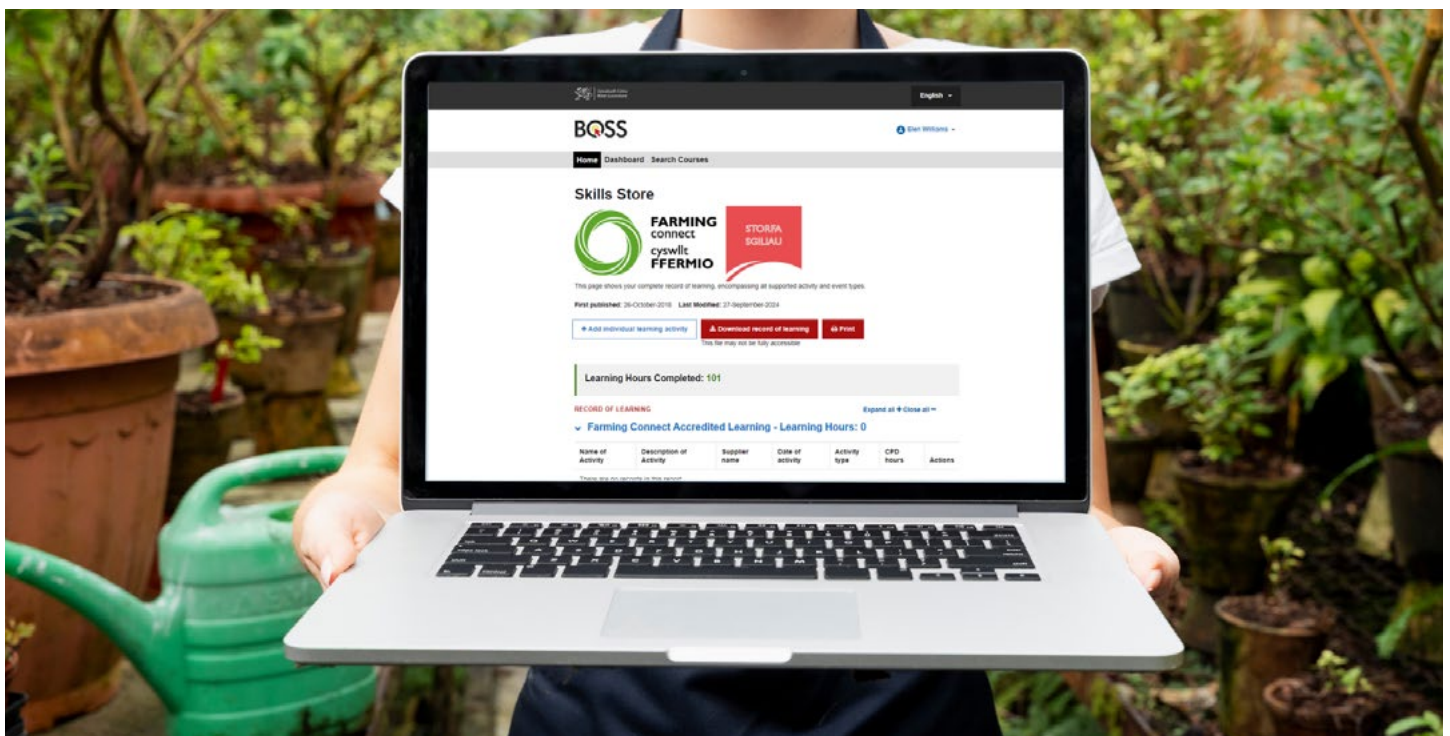
- ✓ Learn new skills or brush up on existing ones
- ✓ Get up to speed with today's best practice, innovation and new technologies
- ✓ Reduce costs for professional expenses and contractor services

Farming Connect provides a range of business, practical and technical training options. Many courses are fully-funded, others are funded up to 80%. Face-to-face short courses and workshops, plus more than 100 e-learning options, are broadly categorised within 'business', 'land', 'livestock' and 'machinery'.

**Calling for stakeholder commitment, professionalising the industry**

Continuing professional development (CPD) is not currently a statutory obligation for most employees in the land-based sectors in Wales, but it is mandatory within many other industries and professions. Dr Nerys Llewelyn Jones, chair of the Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales (AAP), is already working with the key rural stakeholder organisations in Wales, urging them to promote the value of CPD to all their members.

*"Working safely, more efficiently and increasing your skill set will help you and your business progress and ensure a sustainable future,"* said Dr. Llewelyn Jones.





# REARING HEALTHY CALVES - why it's essential to cover all bases

Youngstock losses, whether through mortality, disease or reduced growth, come at a huge economic cost to beef and dairy farmers, explains Clara Valderrama, a specialist farm vet with Farm First Vets in Abergavenny. Clara recommends you discuss the following critical checkpoints with your vet and draw up a calf health plan, including a colostrum management plan, together.

## 1. COLOSTRUM

All antibodies to protect calves from early life infections come from colostrum. Get the 'three Qs' right to ensure maximum protection of your youngstock!

### › Quantity

Every calf needs colostrum based on 10% of its bodyweight (4 litres for a 40kg calf) within the first two hours of birth and an additional colostrum dose, based on the same ratio, within the next six hours.

### › Quality

Test colostrum quality - from first milking onwards, ensuring it contains over 50g/l of immunoglobulins (IgG). If it doesn't, supplement with either frozen or artificial colostrum.

### › Quickly

What the calf absorbs through colostrum during the first two – six hours will predetermine its health and ability to fight off infection. Failure to absorb sufficient colostrum quickly, significantly increases the risk of death or severe disease in neonatal calves, particularly from septicaemia and diarrhoea. For weaned calves, reduced antibodies put them at risk of pneumonia.

## 2. DISEASE PREVENTION AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

- › Implement biosecurity best practice at all times.
- › Avoid animal stress which suppresses immunity and may occur due to transportation, temperature extremes, inadequate nutrition, pain and mixing stock.
- › Risks to consider include IBR outbreaks, overcrowding and contact between different groups and ages
- › Work with your vet to try and identify antibiotic resistance issues, Mycoplasma and other pathogens such as BVD and parasites which all reduce immunity.
- › Vaccination of healthy animals may help increase immunity to specific pathogens.



*Clara Valderrama, BSc (Hons) BVetMed MCCVS - Veterinary Surgeon, Farm First Vets*

### 3. HYGIENE AND CLEANLINESS

- › Ensure stock are kept in clean pens with clean, dry bedding and appropriate navel treatments.
- › Collect colostrum cleanly, store it in a fridge for no more than 24 hours or label and freeze. Pasteurise when possible.
- › Always thaw colostrum at less than 60 degrees Celsius through sterilised tube feeders, bottles or teats.

### 4. THE ENVIRONMENT

- › Avoid reducing calf immunity due to poor ventilation or limited space, low temperatures, chilling drafts, damp conditions and respiratory irritants like ammonia or dust.
- › Consider how to best manage the rate of air exchange, humidity and cleanliness which all determine the concentration and survival of pathogens.

### 5. LOOKING AHEAD

Nutrition is key to optimum health. Provision of clean, fresh water and early access to creep feed is essential for rumen development. Ensuring milk feed is sufficient, feeders are clean and accessible, machine feeders are well maintained and feeding schedules are consistent, can all help to minimise stress and allow for better intakes.

Farming Connect provides fully-funded animal health & welfare training workshops covering all the above topics, delivered by approved farm vets throughout Wales. You can also apply for face-to-face accredited short courses, funded up to 80%, and numerous fully-funded e-learning options.

For further information visit <https://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/business/skills-and-training>



# Useful input tips for growers considering new routes to market

## Manure and compost for horticulture businesses

Organic fertilisers are an important resource for adding nutrients to soils and improving crop success and productivity. However, as an organic waste product, manures come with several contamination risks mostly relating to pathogens and chemicals. Ways to lower these risks include storing and composting to help degrade these.

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- Contamination of food crops can lead to zoonotic pathogens causing disease in humans and risk putting a grower out of business
- Crops that may be co-grazed, used as fodder or byproducts fed to livestock could cause disease impacting animal health and productivity.
- Ready-to-eat foods that may not get cooked are at most risk

### WHAT ARE THE REGULATIONS

For use on ready-to-eat crops (*see the table*), where raw manure or processed manure is considered, these must be followed:

1. Fresh manure/slurry can only be applied if there is a **12-month gap to harvesting**, inclusive of a **6-month gap between application and drilling/planting** of crops
2. Alternatively, manure must be **passively stored for 6 months** (*no additional fresh manure being added during this period*) and then can be applied.
3. Self-composted manure must be **turned at least twice in the first 7 days** and **reach 55°C for a minimum of 3 days**
4. The total length of composting with manures should be **at least 3 months** before their application, to increase pathogen removal
5. For mixed growers, where animals are directly adding manure to fields, the same **considerations as point 1 apply** regarding gaps



## READY-TO-EAT CROPS

Top Fruit	Salad and Soft Fruit	Horticulture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top fruit (<i>apples, pears etc.</i>)</li> <li>• Stone fruit (<i>plums, cherries etc.</i>)</li> <li>• Vines</li> <li>• Nuts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lettuce and leafy salads</li> <li>• Radish</li> <li>• Onions</li> <li>• Beans (<i>including runner, broad and dwarf French</i>)</li> <li>• Vining peas</li> <li>• Podded peas sold fresh</li> <li>• Mangetout</li> <li>• Cabbage</li> <li>• Cauliflower</li> <li>• Calabrese/broccoli/kale</li> <li>• Courgettes</li> <li>• Celery</li> <li>• Red beet</li> <li>• Carrots</li> <li>• Herbs</li> <li>• Asparagus</li> <li>• Garlic</li> <li>• Shallot</li> <li>• Spinach</li> <li>• Chicory</li> <li>• Celeriac</li> <li>• Fennel</li> <li>• Soft fruit (<i>currants and berries</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soil based protected cropping (<i>including tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, cress etc.</i>)</li> <li>• Mushrooms</li> </ul>

### How to do it faster

One way to potentially speed up the process of using manure is to ensure eradication of pathogens to safe levels. There are heat treatment systems that can be used for this, but these can be complicated and expensive.

Another faster way involves performing more accurate and monitored composting up to a safety standard known as 'Publicly Available Specification for Composted Materials' (PAS 100). Materials composted to this standard are no longer classified as waste and therefore do not have the regulation restrictions associated. There are costs associated with having the infrastructure and tools to perform composting to this level, along with direct accrediting body costs. Unless you have a scalable business plan to include this it might not be viable.

**It could benefit you to find local PAS100 producers and look at manure supply arrangements in return for reduced cost, safe, high quality compost.**

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Organic	Storage	Application	Supplier guidelines
When growing organic food, it is advised that the livestock manure source is also organic. If this is not the case then you are required by many organic certification bodies to check for contamination. One example being testing for GMO contamination and filling out GMO declaration forms as well as performing pesticide residue testing.	Storage is another period where manure or composted manure can become contaminated by pathogens, as such maintaining high biosecurity during this process is key.	When applying to soils, consider when, where and how you apply these amendments, to avoid contamination and run-off into neighbouring areas and water sources.	Be aware that specific supplier guidelines may stack on top of safety regulations, so look into these when negotiating sales contracts as a grower.

### USEFUL RESOURCES - *Click to find out more*

- [Horticulture Farming Connect](#) ➤ [Food Standard Agency Guidance](#) ➤ [Organic food certification bodies](#)
- [Composting for Horticulture Guidebook](#) ➤ [Manure Compost e-learning](#) ➤ [On site composting e-learning](#)



# New BVD Rules for Wales

From 1 July 2024, the Welsh Government have introduced the **Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (Wales) Order 2024** to support the ambition of BVDCymru (the industry led group) to eradicate BVD from Wales.

Cattle keepers, from **1 July 2024**, will be required to:



Complete an annual herd screen by **1 July 2025** (your vet will be able to advise you on what stock is required to be tested).



Keep Persistently Infected (PI) animals separate from the rest of the herd for the remainder of their lives.

For further information, contact:

- **Your personal Veterinary Practice**
- EIDCymru - **01970 636959**
- Farmers' Union of Wales - your **FUW county office** or **01970 820820**
- NFU Cymru - **0370 845 8458**
- Coleg Sir Gâr - Gelli Aur - **01554 748576**
- Welsh Veterinary Science Centre - **01970 612374**
- Animal Health Services (Mentera) - **01248 668639**

For full guidance visit:

[www.gov.wales/welsh-bovine-viral-diarrhoea-eradication-scheme-guidance](http://www.gov.wales/welsh-bovine-viral-diarrhoea-eradication-scheme-guidance)

or

**Scan here**

