

Annual herd inspection 18 March 2016

By pure luck a sunny dry day was selected to inspect the three herds.

Northern herd

We started with the northern block. Here the ground was waterlogged. We could not use a vehicle to drive us to the cattle. It was the wettest I have ever seen the northern block. Despite the mild winter there was not much grass available for the cattle. This could have been caused by the high rainfall the soil have had to cope with. As a result the cattle, which are normally in a significantly better condition compared to the other two herds, had a body condition score 2-2 ½ (scale 1-5). This is a full condition score less than other years. At the inspection we were hopeful that the weather would improve sufficiently to allow grass growth and it was decided that supplement feeding would not be necessary.

The week previous, during a routine gathering of the herd for liver fluke treatment a large proportion of the herd was scanned for pregnancy. Some animals were identified not to be in-calf and these animals will not be put to the bull again and fattened up to go to the abattoir later this year.

Despite the increasing ideal conditions for the mud snail, intermediate host for the liver fluke parasite, abattoir feedback report fewer cases of acute and historic liver damage by fluke. It is encouraging that the three gatherings and treatments for the parasite over the winter period seem to have effect however using this year after year it can be questioned how sustainable this is as resistance to this treatment is widely reported in other parts of the country.

Park

Most the herd was observed grazing near the river at Pound Farm. Although there did not seem to be much grass out there, animals were in an adequate body condition with a score between 2-3 (scale 1-5). There were a couple of animals that were in significantly poorer condition than the others. Pat was concerned that these animals might not make it through the winter if he didn't start supplement feeding soon. We decided that rather feeding the whole mob the thin animals could be drafted out and kept indoors to receive special treatment.

Southern herd

I was positively surprised to see the animals here to be in the best condition. Usually it is this herd that struggles the most during the winter and if losses occur they always happen in the southern herd. A good representation of the herd was observed grazing near the road to Dial Post. Very little signs of browsing on willow shoots was seen. In previous years by February – March the grass has disappeared and animals are starting to look for alternative sources of food with possible health risks. This does not seem to be the case this year.

Maarten Boers