

Annual herd inspection 13 March 2018

After the recent cold spell and all the rain we've had it felt like spring but ground conditions were still very wet.

Southern herd

We started with the Southern block where we spotted a sow, 2 gilts and 2 six week old piglets. The piglets were very strong and there was no indication that the recent frost and snow had affected them. Nearby we observed two mobs of cattle. All were in the right body condition (BCS 3+) for this time of the year. One mob was seen browsing the willow bushes while the second mob was grazing grass in shallow pond. Pat pointed out that the temperature in the pond was more stable and likely to be warmer than air temperatures in winter aiding grass growth. We passed an area that in previous years had been covered by willow shrub that was browsed by cattle at the time. I was surprised to see that these shrubs have already been transformed into semi mature trees.

Park herd

The whole herd was observed grazing near Pound Farm. It is striking that the Southern herd is always split in various different small groups while, in most cases, the herds in the Park and in the north are seen together. Apart from a few 2 year old steers, all animals were in a good body condition (BC 3+). In previous years there had been a marked difference in body condition between the three herds, in my opinion, this year they all looked to be in a very similar condition.

Fluke treatments were discussed as the prolonged wet period since late summer 2017 has resulted in increased problems on other farms.

Northern herd

The herd was observed grazing near the A272. As the field conditions were very wet we approached the herd on foot. It turned out that the herd isn't used to see people on foot. As a result all animals ran off in a stampede. Despite several attempts the animals kept a distance of about 50 yards. Animals were deemed to be in sufficient body condition.

All in all I believe the animals in the three different herds are probably in the best condition since we started these winter herd inspections in 2011.

Maarten Boers