

Agriculture

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NEWSLETTER

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Welsh scholars make their mark

Hybu Cig Cymru – Meat Promotion Wales (HCC)'s scholarship scheme has seen scholars travel to countries including New Zealand, USA, Australia and Argentina to look at farming practices that could be utilised in Wales for the benefit of the whole industry.

Aberystwyth graduate Eurion Thomas was the winner of the 2009 Scholarship and travelled to New Zealand to look at their grassland management systems. 'it's definitely a great opportunity to study other farming practices and allows you to think outside the box about how you farm' he said. 'It was an invaluable experience for me and I would recommend to anyone that they should apply.' Eurion, of Llanilar, provided regular web updates during the five-week trip via HCC's Face of Welsh Lamb website.

One of the previous year's winners was recent graduate Marc Jones of Trefnant Hall, Berriew near Welshpool who also travelled to New Zealand. He believes that what he learned will have an impact on how he farms. '(photo Y Tir June 2010 p17) Marc travelled to New Zealand to investigate how they are adapting their lamb production systems to meet the changing market requirements. He found that farmers in New Zealand have had to change their farming techniques over the last decade in order to increase

productivity. These changes have included developing new breeds that meet market requirements, increasing abattoir efficiency, enhancing sheep genotype and maintaining a grass and forage based system. More farmers are utilizing composite breeds of sheep and many of the abattoirs have adopted new technologies to improve their efficiencies. Since returning home Marc has already researched some of the ideas he saw in NZ by investigating the potential of growing Swedes, to out-winter ewes on. He added 'What I saw on my scholarship has enabled me to introduce new ideas to the farm. It has allowed me to increase efficiency and productivity on my sheep enterprises.'

IBERS Institute of Biological,
Environmental and Rural Sciences

List of Courses

BSc Honours

Agriculture
Agriculture with Animal Science
Agriculture with Countryside Management
Agriculture with Marketing
Agriculture with Business Studies
Organic Agriculture (1 year top up)

Foundation Degree

Agriculture

Higher National Diploma

Agriculture
Agriculture with Business
Agriculture and Countryside Conservation

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Marc Jones (Left) with Eurion Thomas (Right)





Getting into farming – could this be an opportunity for new entrants ?

Ex student Rhys Williams was recently awarded a Nuffield scholarship (Trehane Trust Award) to look at dairy farm equity.

Rhys is the Farming Enterprise Director and half equity owner of Padog Farms Ltd, farming 1,500 acres, milking 1,300 cows and running 900 youngstock on a low cost, grass-based system on two farms in North Wales on the Llyn Peninsula.



‘Amaizing’

One of the key factors enabling expansion of the University’s dairy herd on The Lodge unit at Trawsgoed to its projected 550 cows, is the production of winter fodder on the outlying units at Morfa Mawr, Frondeg and Lovesgrove. The herd only has access to 128ha (320acres) of grassland which provides all of their grazing requirements and a total of 120ha of grass silage in two cuts but a total of 50ha (125acres) of forage maize, 25ha (62acres) of red clover and 20ha (50acres) of whole-crop wheat are harvested to provide an invaluable array of supplements to this.



“Wealth creation from expanding dairy farm equity partnerships is my overwhelming interest. I am convinced that pasture-based dairy farms in the UK can be very profitable and see equity partnerships offering sound opportunities for young entrants into the dairy industry to progress to ownership and wealth creation. Land owners could also participate in profitable, progressive businesses if they better understood the equity partnership opportunities too.

“I would like to travel to New Zealand, Southern Australia and the South American countries of Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, to see some examples of rapid expansion grass-based dairy equity partnerships. In particular, I am keen to learn about their business structures and partnerships, and about the key profit drivers. I am also keen to learn how the equity partners and the farm managers communicate effectively within and between business units, and how they relay the key profit drivers, for example, pasture growth, fertility targets and cash flow.”

Rhys is keen to put his findings into practice and believes he can expand his own business to up to 7,000 cows, from a base of 1,000, within 10 years if he maintains a tight control on cash flow and rigorous targets for profitability.

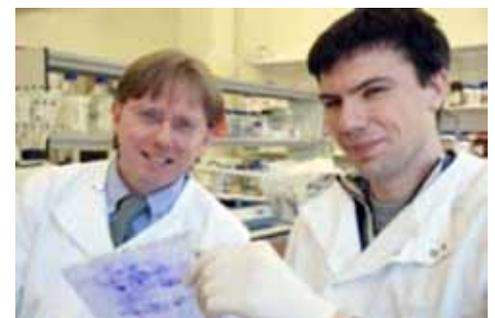
‘Many dairy farms find themselves in this position’ said Farms Manager Dr Huw McConochie ‘with expansion often only being possible by renting or buying land away from the main unit. Not only will these other forages complement grass silage and maximise our production of milk from home grown feeds but the lower harvesting costs and more straightforward logistics of managing a single harvest of the maize and wheat with their high yields and feed value will make the whole operation more cost effective. We are fortunate to farm in a fairly mild part of the country but, by working closely with plant breeders Pioneer and the Irish company Samco, who have developed a fully integrated drilling system to allow the crop to be grown under plastic, we will hopefully come up with the ideal combination of varieties and plastic that will boost crop yields, especially the cobs, and starch content to maximise its contribution to the ration of our highly productive cows.’

£1m international research effort into liver fluke

Aberystwyth University is part of a £1 million international research effort to combat liver fluke – a parasite which causes disease in livestock, resulting in billions of pounds in losses every year to farmers around the world.

The disease caused by liver fluke worms – Fasciolosis – has a huge impact on livestock globally, causing ill health in animals and dramatically reducing productivity. Losses to UK farmers are estimated at over £300 million per year,

Parasitologists from the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) at Aberystwyth University together with Queen’s University, Belfast’s School of Biological Sciences will work with partners in India, in efforts to uncover a new vaccine for the disease.



PhD student Neil Mackintosh and Prof Peter Brophy – uncovering a new vaccine for liver fluke

Professor Wayne Powell, Director of IBERS said: “I am particularly pleased that IBERS is working in partnership to tackle major global challenges and making a contribution to solving some of the most pressing problems in the developing world.”

Professor Aaron Maule from the School of Biological Sciences at Queen’s said: “In the developed world, liver fluke are mainly controlled using drugs which kill them. Drug resistance, however, is spreading. As these drugs become less effective, outbreaks of the disease in the UK are on the rise.

“A new control strategy, based on vaccination or chemotherapy, is urgently needed. This is exactly what we will be working to develop over the next three years, along with our partners in Wales and India. We also believe this technology based strategy for the selection of vaccine and drug targets will be directly transferable to other animal and human parasites, such as blood flukes and tapeworms.”

The £1 million research funding is part of the £13 million Combating Infectious Diseases of Livestock for International Development initiative co-funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, the Department for International Development and the Scottish Executive.