

Rupert's Opportunity 2014: Improving Fawn Survival

R2 fawning performance:

- Only achieving ~70% fawning in R2 hinds, compared to ~90% in MA hinds
- Issues with intensive farming system; flat square paddocks, no natural cover and relatively high stocking rate
- Losses occurring before tagging but probably not due to parasites/clostridials

Traditional fawning policy:

- Emphasis on pasture quality during lactation; "clean out" pastures with dairy heifers before hinds set stocked, allowing new grass to grow during fawning
- Some Cu supplementation (copper sulphate in troughs) but unreliable
- Hinds set stocked 8/ha

What we did in 2014/2015

- Copper**
- Liver biopsied hinds late Sept which showed low levels
 - Gave hinds Cu bolus early Oct (most of them got spat out!)
 - Results negligible; this season will try injectable
- Scanning**
- Double scanned R2 hinds to rule out losses in-utero
 - 1st scan 92% (9 empty out of 108), 2nd 91% (1 more empty)
- Fawn proofing** Put an extra 2 wires up along bottom of netting

Changed pasture policy

- Decided to sacrifice pasture quality
- Set stocked 23rd Oct with at least 2500kgDM/ha
- Focused on providing high quality feed in paddock next door

FAWNING RESULTS 2010-2014

Season	2014		2013		2012		2011		2010	
Age	R2	MA	R2	MA	R2	MA	R2	MA	R2	MA
No.s	108	324	101	301	114	261	112	148	62	200
Fawning success	83%	90%	71%	93%	73%	91%	72%	95%	85%	96%
Total fawning %	87%		82%		82%		84%		91%	

- Most important change in management was to lift pasture covers
- Used dairy heifers to clean up paddocks after fawning (mow, supplement with silage and PKE – perfect for drought year)
- No increase in fawning trouble due to hinds being fatter
- Lots of live fawns at first vaccination. After removing empties at scanning, remaining R2 hinds achieved 92% fawning success
- It does not pay to keep empty R2 hinds (had 20 dry first fawners carried over from 2013, 14 (70%) were dry again in 2014). Without these, our total hind fawning performance in 2014 would have been 94%