

Using health plans on organic farms III – organic hill and lowland sheep and beef

Case study: John and Elin Owen, Monachdy Bach, Pennant, Llannon, Ceredigion
In conversion to organic hill and lowland sheep and beef

John and Elin Owen farm three blocks of land, Monachdy Bach the 385 acre lowland home farm, a 3000 acre hill farm (shared between three family businesses) and a 100 acre grazing unit. The Owens are in conversion to organic and will become fully organic on 1 July 2008. They farm 100 suckler cows (pure bred Salers and Aberdeen Angus crosses), approximately 300 Welsh Mountain ewes and 400 lowland Easy Care ewes.

The Owens started conversion in 2006 and began written health planning as a requirement of organic conversion and certification and for the FAWL quality assurance scheme. Prior to this time health planning had been taking place on the farm, but not the formalised process of sitting down with the vet and developing a strategy for improving animal health.

The Owens philosophy on the farm with regard to animal health is that animals should be fit and healthy and be able to resist disease challenges. Their health plan therefore is focused on appropriate breed selection, lowered stocking rates, culling strategies and strict bio-security. Obviously there are specific health problems that need addressing such as footrot, scab, flystrike and in the past BVD, therefore specific preventative and treatment strategies have also been developed.

The Owens have had a unique opportunity during conversion to select for the healthiest and most productive animals on the farm due to the need to reduce stocking rates under organic management. This has given them the opportunity to address problems such as footrot and internal parasites. Prior to conversion, footrot, at its worst, affected 20% of the flock. The flock was vaccinated for 2 years prior to conversion and since then the strategy has been to cull animals that are persistently infected. If footrot is identified in an animal it will be treated once, but if further infection occurs the animal will be removed from the flock. This has increased the proportion of resistant animals in the flock and reduced the incidence of footrot. Similarly, dirty ewes are culled from the flock to reduce the internal parasite problem and hence drenching. The need to drench is further reduced because the majority of lowland lambs are sold soon after weaning. Cattle infertility is another health problem addressed through animal selection. If heifers are not in calf after the second oestrus they are removed from the herd and likewise for cows that are not in calf after 9 weeks in with the bull. In 2007, 52% of the suckler herd were in calf after the 1st cycle, 32% after the 2nd and 16% after the 3rd – only 1 cow was empty compared with the more usual 2 or 3 empty prior to conversion. The Owens also closely monitoring trace element levels in the cows at bulling and undertake forage analyses and supplementation where needed – this has also contributed to improved fertility in the herd.

A health management strategy has also been developed for the prevention of sheep scab. Scab is a problem for the Welsh Mountain flock as it is impossible to maintain biosecurity in the mountain, common grazing situation. Therefore, all animals from the mountain (grazed there for 6 months) are injected for scab when they return the lowland farm (this also addresses internal parasite problems). The animals are injected due to the ban on synthetic pyrethroid dips and the farmers' personal dislike of organophosphates and the implications these have for the marketing of lamb as organic. The decision to use injectables to control scab has meant that certain system changes have had to be made. Because of the prolonged withholding period (twice the manufacturer's limit) required under organic regulations, lambs have to come down from the mountain earlier to ensure the withholding period is over before they are sold in late September. The mountain and lowland flocks never come into contact with each other, preventing the potential spread of scab.

Breed selection has been an important part of health planning since the conversion to organic began. The beef suckler herd at Monachdy Bach used to be cross bred Aberdeen Angus, which over time was moved toward pure bred Angus. This resulted in decreased fertility in the herd so it was decided to move towards cross breeds again to take advantage of hybrid vigour. Salers, a hardy French dual purpose breed were chosen for their good mothering ability and ease of calving which complimented the Angus characteristics well and improved the general robustness and vigour of the herd. Similarly, the lowland flock has been changed from improved Welsh Mountain to Easy Care ewes over the last few years. This breed is known for its hardiness, wool shedding and ease of lambing.

The Owens, with the assistance of their vet, have developed a very clear preventative health management strategy on their farm, with the key aspects of this being:

- Using resistant, vigorous breeds and strains
- Reducing stocking density
- Culling animals that have persistent health problems
- Strict biosecurity and closed flocks and herds

These practices, in combination with planned strategies for dealing with individual health problems, have resulted in good levels of animal health on the farm.

Organic Centre Wales · Health Planning Case Study · February 2008

Defnyddio cynlluniau iechyd ar ffermydd organig III: gwartheg a defaid mynydd a thir isel

Astudiaeth achos: John ac Elin Owen, Monachdy Bach, Pennant, Llan-non, Ceredigion
Yn trosglwyddo i ffermio gwartheg a defaid mynydd a thir isel yn organig

Mae John ac Elin Owen yn ffermio tri darn o dir, sef Monachdy Bach, y fferm 385 erw ar dir isel sy'n gartref iddynt, fferm ucheldir 3000 erw (a rennir rhwng 3 o fusnesau teulu), ac uned bori 100 erw. Mae John ac Elin Owen yn trosglwyddo i ffermio organig ac fe fyddant yn gwbl organig ar 1 Gorffennaf 2008. Mae ganddynt 100 o wartheg magu (*Salers* o frid pur a chroesfridiau *Aberdeen Angus*), oddeutu 300 o famogiaid Mynydd Cymreig, a 400 o famogiaid *Easy Care* tir isel.

Dechreuodd John ac Elin Owen drosglwyddo yn 2006 gan ddechrau cynllunio iechyd yn ysgrifenedig er mwyn bodloni gofynion trosglwyddo i organig ac a chael ardstiad ac ar gyfer cynllun sicrwydd ansawdd FAWL. Cyn hynny, yr oedd peth cynllunio iechyd yn digwydd ar y fferm, ond nid o'r math ffurfiol lle'r eisteddir gyda milfeddyg i ddatblygu strategaeth i wella iechyd anifeiliaid.

O ran iechyd anifeiliaid, mae'r teulu yn credu y dylai'r anifeiliaid fod yn gryf ac yn iach er mwyn gallu gwrthsefyll unrhyw afiechydon. Gan hynny, y mae eu cynllun iechyd yn canolbwyntio ar ddethol bridiau priodol, stocio llai o anifeiliaid, strategaethau cwllino, a bioddiogelwch tynn. Ar ben hynny, y mae'n rhaid rhoi sylw i broblemau iechyd penodol megis braenedd y traed, y clafr, cynrhon ac, yn y gorffennol, ysgothi firol gwartheg (*BVD*). Felly, y mae strategaethau atal a thrin afiechydon penodol wedi cael eu datblygu hefyd.

Mae'r proses trosglwyddo wedi rhoi cyfle unigryw i'r teulu ddewis yr anifeiliaid iachaf a mwyaf cynhyrchiol ar y fferm, a hynny oherwydd yr angen i leihau cyfraddau stocio o dan reolaeth organig. Mae hyn wedi rhoi cyfle iddynt roi sylw i broblemau megis braenedd y traed a pharasitiaid mewnlol. Cyn trosglwyddo, yr oedd braenedd y traed, ar ei waethaf, yn effeithio ar 20% o'r praid. Brechwyd y praid ddwy flynedd cyn trosglwyddo ac, ers hynny, y mae anifeiliaid sy'n cael eu heintio'n gyson yn cael eu cwllino. Os gwelir bod anifail yn dioddef o fraenedd y traed, fe'i trinnir ar unwaith. Ond os yw'n cael ei heintio drachefn, fe'i tynnir o'r praid. Mae hyn wedi cynyddu nifer yr anifeiliaid sy'n gallu gwrthsefyll yr haint o fewn y praid ac, o ganlyniad, mae'r nifer sy'n dioddef o'r clwyf wedi mynd yn llai. Yn yr un modd, y mae mamogiaid budron yn cael eu didol er mwyn lleihau'r broblem o barasitiaid mewnlol a, chan hynny, yr angen i'w drenio. Mae'r angen i ddrenio'r anifeiliaid yn cael ei leihau ymhellach gan fod trwch helaeth yr ŵyn tir isel yn cael eu gwerthu'n fuan ar ôl eu diddyfno. Problem arall yr ymdrinnir â hi drwy ddethol anifeiliaid yw anffurthlondeb ymhlith gwartheg. Os nad yw heffrod yn feichiog ar ôl yr ail estrws, fe'u tynnir o'r gyr, ac felly hefyd, yn achos gwartheg nad ydynt wedi beichiogi ar ôl treulio 9 wythnos gyda tharw. Yn 2007, yr oedd 52% o'r gyrr magu yn feichiog ar ôl y cylch cyntaf, 32% ar ôl yr ail gylch, ac 16% ar ôl y trydydd cylch - dim ond un fuwch oedd heb feichiogi o'i chymharu â'r ddwy neu'r tair buwch a oedd yn fwy arferol cyn trosglwyddo. Mae'r Oweniaid hefyd yn monitro lefelau elfennau hybrin yn ofalus yn eu gwartheg gwasod, ac yn

dadansoddi eu porthiant ac yn defnyddio ychwanegion pan fo angen – mae hyn hefyd wedi helpu i wella ffrwythlondeb y gyr.

Mae strategaeth rheoli iechyd hefyd wedi cael ei datblygu ar gyfer atal y clafr ymhlith defaid. Mae'r clafr yn gryn broblem i'r praid o ddefaid Mynydd Cymreig, a hynny oherwydd ei bod yn amhosibl sicrhau bioddiogelwch ar y mynydd-dir lle maent yn pori. Felly, caiff pob anifail sydd wedi bod yn pori ar y mynydd am chwe mis ei frechu yn erbyn y clafr pan ddychwelant i'r fferm ar y tir isel (mae hyn hefyd yn datrys problemau a achosir gan barasitiaid mewnlol). Mae'r anifeiliaid yn cael eu brechu gan fod dipiau pyrethroid synthetig wedi eu gwahardd, a chan nad yw'r ffermwr yn hoffi organoffosffadau. Mae'r penderfyniad i ddefnyddio chwistrellau i reoli'r clafr wedi golygu rhywfaint o newid. Gan fod yn rhaid wrth gyfnod ymatal estynedig o dan reoliadau organig (sef dwywaith yn fwy nag argymhellion y gwneuthurwyr) y mae'n rhaid i'r ŵyn ddod i lawr o'r mynydd yn gynt i sicrhau bod y cyfnod ymatal wedi dod i ben cyn iddynt gael eu gwerthu ym mis Medi. Nid yw preiddiau'r mynydd a'r tir isel yn dod i gyswllt â'i gilydd, felly, atelir y craff rhag cael ei ledaenu.

Mae dewis bridiau yn rhan bwysig o gynllunio iechyd ers dechrau'r trosglwyddo i'r drefn organig. Gwartheg Aberdeen Angus croesfrid oedd y gwartheg ym Monachdy Bach. Ond gydag amser, trowyd at Aberdeen Angus pur eu brid. Achosodd hyn gwymp mewn ffrwythlondeb, felly, penderfynwyd y dylid troi at groesfridiau unwaith eto er mwyn manteisio ar wytnwch croesryw. Dewiswyd *Salers*, sef brid gwydn Ffrengig, a hynny am eu bod yn lloia'n rhwydd ac yn famau da; roeddent yn cyd-fynd yn dda â nodweddion yr Aberdeen Angus ac yn ffordd o rymuso'r gyr. Yn yr un modd, y mae mamogiaid *Easy Care* wedi disodli'r mamogiaid Mynydd Cymreig ar yr iseldir yn y blynyddoedd diwethaf. Mae'r brid yma yn nodedig am ei wydnwch, am fwrw gwlan ac am wyna'n rhwydd.

Mae John ac Elin Owen, gyda chymorth eu milfeddyg, wedi datblygu strategaeth rheoli iechyd ataliol glir iawn ar eu fferm. Dyma brif nodweddion y strategaeth:

- Defnyddio bridiau a rhywogaethau gwydn a chryf
 - Lleihau dwysedd y stoc
 - Didol anifeiliaid gyda phroblemau iechyd parhaus
 - Bioddiogelwch tynn, a phreiddiau a gyroedd caeedig
- Law yn llaw â strategaethau a gynlluniwyd ar gyfer ymdrin â phroblemau iechyd unigol, y mae'r arferion uchod wedi sicrhau bod iechyd yr anifeiliaid ar y fferm yn dda.

Canolfan Organig Cymru · Astudiaeth Achos Cynllunio Iechyd · Chwefror 2008