

## Discussion groups drive change

by Hefin Llwyd

I was invited in June 2013 to attend an EBLEX Grazing Discussion Group that had recently been set up in the South West, facilitated by Luppo Diepenbroek. The idea was to bring like-minded farmers together to discuss various topics concerning grassland management and grazing.

I had been measuring grass growth and seasonal variations in production for a number of years. I had found this level of attention to detail to be extremely beneficial to my business, as it allowed me to utilise my grass effectively. The aim was to have my animals eating around 80% of the grass dry matter grown.

The knock-on effect was very evident in stock performance. I regularly weighed and monitored lamb growth rates, as well as overall flock performance for several years, so I had a good understanding of the difference a well-managed, fertile sward containing modern grass/clover varieties could make.

Employing better grazing management through rotational grazing and constant sward assessment and measuring, also had a very positive effect on the business's bottom line. This was due to increased stocking densities and the ability to provide the right grazing to the class of stock that could efficiently turn it into milk and meat.

### Problem discovered

I was also aware that there were underlying problems in some fields that were leading to under-performing stock and reduced grass yields. Work had already been undertaken to correct pH and phosphate (P) levels. However, it came to light during the group visit that compaction issues were very evident, so remedial action was taken to rectify this too.

This was the kind of benefit I gained from being a part of the group. The fact that we visited each member's farm in turn was a great way to focus on different issues.

I found the open and honest discussion on a variety of subjects refreshing and the ability for one farmer to help another with friendly advice or constructive criticism a real bonus.

It gave me the chance to expand my knowledge base, and always gave me fresh ideas and impetus. The way in which we all shared our experiences, good and bad was the real positive for me.

We are sometimes guilty of being too scared to embrace new ideas or implement a new technique for fear of failure. Being involved with this grazing group certainly allowed me to see how other farmers were trying out new ideas. Being part of the on-going discussions, we were able to update each other on certain issues - this was probably the single biggest benefit I found.

I would strongly recommend anyone interested in improving their grassland management or any grazing issues to set up, or join a local grazing discussion group.



Contact [Liz Genever](#) if you would like to explore the options for setting up a grazing discussion group in your area