

Environmental Grazing Case Study

Stephen and Sally Baker

Disgwylfa, Pontyberem, Carmarthenshire



Disgwylfa is situated a few miles south east of Carmarthen. Stephen and Sally Baker purchased the former dairy farm in October 2000. The farm started organic conversion the following year and had full organic status in 2003.

- 89 ha
- 14 ha rough grazing
- 8 ha woodland
- Land rises from 300ft to 700ft
- 120 head of cattle

Disgwylfa entered the Tir Gofal scheme in 2003 where payments could be obtained to improve the unused peat land by grazing with Welsh Black cattle. There are various grazing prescriptions across the farm from 0.4 to 6.38 livestock units per year. Due to the light stocking for the organic system and the nature of the farm, very little had to be changed to comply with Tir Gofal and the majority of the Tir Gofal prescriptions support habitat improvement.

There are 42 Welsh Black cows in their herd, including 8 heifers. Cattle are housed in November until the last week of April and then graze the improved pasture and hay fields before they are moved on to the semi natural rough grazing. The farm also winters 120 ewes from an organic farm in Tregaron. These are on the farm for four months, from the end of October to the beginning of March.

Calves are weaned in January and tend to be sold finished although this year ten stores were sold privately in January at 17 months old and averaged 380kg. A further six steers were sold in December at 20 months old and averaged 450kg. Due to the organic status, the Bakers decided not to use any concentrates but this does delay finishing. A natural rock salt lick is used to improve health and reduce worm burden. They have a derogation to treat the cattle with a flukicide and insecticide (for external parasites) twice a year.

Apart from replacement heifers, calves are finished on the farm and most are sold as boxed meat at around 28 months old. The meat is vacuum packed in 10kg or 20kg boxes and comes with recipes and a diagram of where the cuts have come from on the carcass. Most customers are local and like to see where the cattle graze and are housed. Many have a preference for Welsh Black beef, for organic meat and the splendid flavour which Mr Baker believes is due to their diet. Cattle graze only natural pastures and are fed just hay when housed. Some cattle are also sold to Graig Farm Organics. Most years hay is made on 45 ha of the farm. Mr Baker believes that this a cheaper option for him than big bale silage and is better for the environment since more wild

flower seeds are spread and no silage wrap is needed. Lower quality hay is fed to dry cows to help prevent calving difficulties and the better quality hay is fed to the youngstock.

Two fields (8 ha) are currently under reversion. Tir Gofal prescriptions advise that animals are removed eight weeks prior to cutting and hay must not be cut until 1st July after the flowers have seeded on this land. This date varies from farm to farm and region to region. Also a restricted amount of manure is applied to these fields.

Environmental and Financial Benefits

Previously the rushes and gorse on the peat land were topped twice a year. Since using cattle to graze the area during the summer months, the rushes and molinia are now at a controllable level and grazing has allowed other species such as heather to re-establish. Topping of some patches is only needed once per year if a specific area has become too strong for the cattle.

The areas which are topped are also carefully selected to allow space and habitats for birds. Since joining Tir Gofal there has been an increase in the number of birds as well as plant species. Lapwings, curlews and sky larks are spotted in increasing numbers.

An extra benefit has been the financial support that is available to improve the water system with drinking troughs and water pipes. The support towards fencing has also improved all boundary fencing and enabled them to fence woodland to exclude stock from grazing areas that were not suitable for them.

Tir Gofal fits perfectly with Mr Baker's system and aspirations. He said "These schemes are the only economic way to farm extensively, and if we were not in these schemes we would have to increase production which would consequently damage the land. Through the Tir Gofal scheme we have been able to improve the woodland and peat land, restore hedgerows and field boundaries. We are hoping that during the next inspection, the fields currently under reversion will be classified as semi natural and we will then put other fields into reversion."

Astudiaeth Achos Pori Amgylcheddol

Stephen a Sally Baker

Disgwylfa, Pontyberem, Sir Gaerfyrddin



Ymunodd Disgwylfa â'r cynllun Tir Gofal yn 2003 pan oedd modd cael taliadau i wella tir mawn heb ei ddefnyddio drwy bori â gwartheg Duon Cymreig. Mae'r rhagofynion pori ar gyfer y fferm yn amrywio o 0.4 i 6.38 o unedau da byw y flwyddyn. Oherwydd y stocio ysgafn ar gyfer y system organig ac oherwydd natur y fferm, nid oedd angen fawr ddim o newid er mwyn cydymffurfio â Thir Gofal ac mae'r rhan fwyaf o'r rhagofynion Tir Gofal yn ategu gwella'r amgylchedd.

Yn y fuches mae 42 o fuchod Duon Cymreig, gan gynnwys wyth o heffrod. Cedwir y gwartheg dan do o fis Tachwedd tan wythnos olaf Ebrill. Wedyn byddant yn pori'r tir sydd wedi'i wella a'r caeau gwair cyn cael eu symud i'r tir pori garw lled-naturiol. Hefyd, yn y gaeaf mae 120 o famogiaid o fferm organig yn Nhregaron yn pori ar y fferm. Mae'r rhain yn treulio pedwar mis ar dir Disgwylfa, o ddiwedd mis Hydref tan ddechrau mis Mawrth.

Caiff y lloi eu diddyfnu ym mis Ionawr. Fel arfer, cânt eu pesgi cyn eu gwerthu, ond eleni gwerthwyd deg anifail stôr ym mis Ionawr; roedd y rhain yn 17 mis oed ac yn pwysu 380kg ar gyfartaledd. Gwerthwyd chwe bustach arall ym mis Rhagfyr pan oeddynt yn 20 mis oed ac yn pwysu 450kg ar gyfartaledd. Oherwydd y statws organig, penderfynodd y teulu Baker beidio â defnyddio unrhyw ddwysfwydydd, ond mae hyn yn oedi'r pesgi. Defnyddir llyfaen halen craig naturiol i wella iechyd a lleihau'r llwyth llyngyr. Mae yna rannirymiad i drin y gwartheg â llyngyrleiddiad a phryfleiddiad (ar gyfer parasitiaid allanol) ddwywaith y flwyddyn.

Ar wahân i heffrod amnewid, caiff y lloi eu pesgi ar y fferm a chaiff y rhan fwyaf eu lladd oddeutu 28 mis oed a gwerthir eu cig mewn bocsys. Caiff y cig ei bacio dan wactod mewn bocsys 10kg neu 20kg ynghyd â ryseitiau a diagram i ddangos o ba ran o'r carcass y daeth y gwahanol ddarnau. Mae'r rhan fwyaf o'r cwsmeriaid yn byw'n lleol ac am weld lle mae'r gwartheg yn pori ac yn cael eu cadw dan do. Mae'n well gan lawer gael cig eidion o wartheg Duon Cymreig, a chael cig organig sy'n blasu'n rhagorol. Mae Mr Baker o'r farn taw diet y gwartheg sy'n gyfrifol am hyn. Mae'r gwartheg yn pori ar borfa naturiol yn unig, ac yn cael gwair yn unig pan fyddant o dan do. Caiff rhai gwartheg eu gwerthu i gwmni Graig Farm Organics. Bron bob blwyddyn, bydd gwair yn cael ei gynaeafu ar 45 ha ar

Mae Disgwylfa, a arferai fod yn fferm laeth, ychydig filltiroedd i'r de ddwyrain o Gaerfyrddin. Fe'i prynwyd gan Stephen a Sally Baker ym mis Hydref 2000. Dechreuwyd ei throï'n fferm organig y flwyddyn ganlynol a chafodd statws organig llawn yn 2003.

- 89 ha
- 14 ha o dir pori garw
- 8 ha o goetir
- Y tir yn codi o 300 i 700 troedfedd
- 120 o wartheg

y fferm. Mae Mr Baker o'r farn fod hyn yn rhatach iddo na chynhyrchu byrnau mawr o silwair a'i fod yn well i'r amgylchedd oherwydd caiff mwy o hadau blodau gwyllt eu gwasgaru ac nid oes angen unrhyw ddefnydd lapio. Bydd y gwair gwaelaf yn cael ei roi i'r buchod sych er mwyn helpu i osgoi trafferthion lloia a bydd y gwair gorau'n cael ei roi i'r anifeiliaid ifainc.

Ar hyn o bryd mae dau gae yn cael eu hadfer. Yn unol â rhagofynion Tir Gofal, caiff yr anifeiliaid eu symud wyth wythnos cyn lladd gwair a rhaid peidio â lladd tan 1 Gorffennaf ar ôl i'r blodau hadu ar y tir hwn. Mae'r dyddiad hwn yn amrywio o fferm i fferm ac o ardal i ardal. Hefyd, cyfyngir ar faint o achles sy'n cael ei wasgaru ar y caeau hyn.

Manteision Amgylcheddol ac Ariannol

Yn y gorffennol, roedd y brwyn a'r eithin ar y tir mawn yn cael eu brigdorri ddwywaith y flwyddyn. Ers defnyddio gwartheg i bori ar y tir hwn yn ystod misoedd yr haf, mae'r brwyn a glaswellt y gweunydd o dan reolaeth ac mae pori wedi golygu bod rhywogaethau eraill megis grug wedi ailsefydlu. Dim ond unwaith y flwyddyn y mae angen brigdorri peth o'r tir, os yw wedi mynd yn rhy gryf i'r gwartheg.

Caiff y rhannau sy'n cael eu brigdorri eu dewis yn ofalus er mwyn gadael lle a chynefinoedd i adar. Ers ymuno â Thir Gofal, mae nifer yr adar a nifer y rhywogaethau o blanhigion wedi cynyddu. Mae nifer gynyddol o gornchwiglod, gylfinirod ac ehedyddion i'w gweld erbyn hyn.

Mantais arall yw'r cymorth ariannol sydd ar gael i wella'r system ddŵr â chafnau yfed a phibellau. Hefyd, mae'r cymorth ar gyfer ffensio wedi gwella'r ffensys terfyn ac wedi galluogi'r teulu i ffensio coetir i gadw da byw allan o dir nad yw'n addas ar eu cyfer.

Mae Tir Gofal yn hollol gydnaws â chyfundrefn Mr Baker a'i ddyheadau. Meddai Mr Baker "Y cynlluniau hyn yw'r unig ffordd sy'n gwneud synnwyr ariannol o ran defnydd dulliau llai dwys i ffermio. Oni bai am y cynlluniau hyn fe fyddem ni wedi gorfod cynhyrchu mwy ac wedi gwneud difrod i'r tir o'r herwydd. Trwy gynllun Tir Gofal, rydym wedi gallu gwella'r coetir a'r tir mawn, ac adfer gwrychoedd a therfynau'r caeau. Rydym yn gobeithio, yn ystod yr archwiliad nesaf, y bydd y caeau sy'n cael eu hadfer ar hyn o bryd yn cael eu dosbarthu'n caeau lled-naturiol ac yna fe fyddwn yn dechrau adfer caeau eraill."