

New Entrants to Farming Programme



National Advice Hub
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Case Study

William Boyd



“(1) Build a wide variety of skills as you will need them all once farming

(2) Go and talk to people and see different systems, and

(3) Save everywhere possible

These things will help find then grasp opportunities.”

Understanding the contract farming agreement helped focus priorities

A short biog...

William grew up on a Lanarkshire family dairy farm. He always had a keen interest in farming but firstly wanted to broaden his experience by going to Strathclyde University, graduating with a degree in Construction Engineering.

He subsequently travelled to New Zealand and Australia working on and looking at different farming systems. William returned home to work for eight years before gaining employment as stockman on a reputed beef and sheep farm.

Throughout this period he steadily built-up his own sheep numbers. When a contract farming agreement became available in the local area that also required the contractor to provide livestock it was too good an opportunity to pass.

He compiled his business plan and was ultimately successful,

taking on a 420 acre beef and sheep unit in November 2013.

William continues to build stock numbers and ‘bed-in’ a system that fits the farm and land type - currently running 30 cows and 650 ewes.

What is your main motivation to farm?

I’m a keen stockman and enjoy farming. I want the challenge to build something and stand on my own feet.

What has been your biggest challenge as a new entrant?

Probably the biggest factor is generating a cash return, quickly.

It hasn't helped that I was trying to expand numbers at the same time when commodity prices slumped. I had fewer lambs to sell at lower value per head.

What hurdles have you had to overcome?

Another big hurdle was learning how a contract farming agreement works. Building a strong relationship with the farmer (and bank manager) is essential!

A sensible, easy to follow, business plan is important, otherwise I'd only be fooling myself.

I needed to get to know what the fields and livestock could achieve on this land quickly too. I don't own the land and the contract agreement is on a rolling basis so my priority is 'doing best' by the farm and farmer to generate a return. We cannot afford to be complacent or sink lots of money into high capital infrastructure.

Focus on grassland management has therefore become a top priority.

What financial & advisory assistance have you received?

I have a good relationship with my bank manager and accountant. This is invaluable.

We also received advice at the start from the local SAC office. I was also part of a New Entrant to Farming group (Lanark area) and I'm in a local beef and sheep group.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

Build a wide variety of skills, you will need them, especially at the start. Surround yourself with good people and ask to be challenged. Also, if the business plan is too complicated you lose focus hence my lower input easier care approach.



What are your future ambitions?

First off, generate sufficient funds to build a viable future in farming. That needs to be through profits, but I need to continue selecting cows and ewes that are low input in terms of labour and costs but generate a high market value - producing what the market wants.

Financials are majorly important, but I aim to build something that is both viable and enjoyable.

New Entrants to Farming “get with the” Programme

There is a network of new entrants across the country at various stages of developing their businesses. You can join in:

- www.facebook.com/NewEntrants
- www.fas.scot/new-entrants/
- Regional workshops

For more info contact Kirsten Williams, Consultant, SAC Consulting, Clifton Road, Turriff, 01888 563333, Kirsten.Williams@sac.co.uk

There are useful free resources on the website too:

- Case studies—learning from the experiences of other new entrants.
- Guidance notes—benefit from advice tailored to assist new entrants to farming.
- Also see www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/NewEntrantsToFarming

