

### Acting In Your Interests - Engaging With CAP Reform!



What will CAP Reform mean for north west cattle keepers? By this winter the key decisions on 'decoupling' in Scotland will have been made. In order to protect your interests NWCPA has made an early start on this all important issue. Over the summer NWCPA representatives raised the matter with the First Minister, Jack MacConnell. He arranged a meeting with Allan Wilson, Deputy Minister for SEERAD while the Deputy Minister was in Assynt attending the 'Fling in the Fank' Conference.

As a result the NWCPA Committee have been assured that they will be invited to a 'Stakeholders Conference' in Edinburgh to discuss how the potential negative impacts of decoupling can be off-set for north west cattle producers.

In a written submission to SEERAD, NWCPA Chair Allan MacRae points out that "a critical mass of cattle keepers is key to the health of our local communities, economies and environment." NWCPA Committee members brought to the Minister's

attention the impact of regional disadvantages like distance to markets, weather, transport costs and poorer quality ground on agriculture in areas like the north west.

Focusing on the coming changes in support Allan MacRae noted that, "agricultural support for crofting areas involves relatively small amounts of money but has strong, positive social, economic and environmental benefits since crofting agriculture is low intensity and pivotal to the local communities and all associated activities."

Debate over the way in which CAP Reform might be implemented at a Scottish level have recently eclipsed previous concerns over access to Suckler Cow Premium quota. However NWCPA has pointed out that, "We are particularly concerned that local producers who are just building up cattle numbers and producers in the north west who lack Suckler Cow Premium quota do not find themselves once again disadvantaged when decoupling arrives. It must be noted that lack of meaningful extra support for cattle keepers in these fragile areas **increases** market disadvantages."

Summing up the main local concerns, Allan MacRae stated that, "Reversing the historic decline in cattle numbers will take many years and recent small gains could be totally undermined by lack of meaningful support under the new CAP system. For the decline to be stemmed cattle keeping must be economic in these areas – all we seek is a level playing field in that sense, which means financial support to off-set existing regional disadvantage."

The NWCPA will continue make every effort to protect your interests during consultation on Scottish level implementation of CAP Reform.

## How Many Tons of Dung A Year?

That was the question causing debate in the Ullapool High School Geography class when the schools went back after the summer. The answer is 4 tons a year – the amount of dung produced by the average cow.

Insects lay eggs in the dung and as a result each cow produces a quarter of it's own bodyweight in insects each year. If the average cow produces 4 tons of dung a year and the average weight of a cow is 0.5 tons – what weight in insects does each cow produce each year?

*Answer: about 0.125 tons or 125 kilos.* That's a whole lot of eating for insect eating birds and animals like wagtails, swallows, woodcock, bats, shrews and badgers. In the great scheme of things other birds and animals prey on the smaller birds and mammals so when cattle disappear so do a whole lot of other animals and birds.

**PLEASE SUPPORT NWCPA –**

### JOIN US!

Open to all cattle producers and those interested in **supporting** cattle production in the parishes of Assynt, Eddrachilles, Durness, Tongue and Farr.

#### Joining Fee

- Individuals - £10 per year
- Groups & Townships - £30 per year

Please make cheques out to NWCPA .

**THANK YOU!**

#### NWCPA Membership Form -----✂✂✂✂✂

<b>Full Name</b>						
<b>Address</b>						
<b>Postcode:</b>		<b>Telephone:</b>				
<b>E-mail:</b>		<b>Cheque Enclosed?</b>			YES/NO	
<b>Crofter</b>	<b>Farmer</b>	<b>Township / Local group</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Date of Joining NWCPA</b>	If you do <b>NOT</b> wish your details to be added to the NWCPA members' database, used only for NWCPA work please tick.	
<b>Do you keep cattle?.</b>		<b>No. of Cows:</b>	<b>Which breed(s)?:</b>		<b>No of SCP quota units held</b>	<b>Preferred Bull Breed</b>
YES/NO						

Send Membership Form to: Issie MacPhail NWCPA, 204 Clashmore, Stoer, Lochinver, Sutherland IV27 4JQ

## Timely Focus on Future Support Entitlement for North West Cattle Keepers

In August NWCPA let a contract specifically aimed at examining current and future agricultural support options for individuals and groups or stock clubs in the north west. Jim Seton will be working on this issue with us throughout the autumn. Many of you will remember Jim from his days with the SAC in Thurso. Jim went on to become North Regional Director for SAC and then Head of their Farm & Rural Business Division. He now works as a consultant, currently splitting his time between our job in the north west and another job in Poland. The Polish work has no connection with NWCPA – in case you are wondering!! Support for this work has been provided by CASE and the Crofters Commission.

### NWCPA Membership

Membership is currently increasing week by week. At present NWCPA represents 52 individual members and 3 group members. This means that NWCPA is working on behalf of 99 people. More than half of them keep cattle and others are intent on getting cattle.

NWCPA research indicates that there are a total of 82 cattle keepers in the north west which means that already **over 50%** of all cattle keepers are members. If you still haven't joined don't get left behind! Fill in the form below and post without delay.

Many thanks to all of you who have joined and are helping out in a whole lot of ways. It is because of you that such a new group is managing to make important progress so quickly.

## A Word From the Chairman

*NWCPA continues to make steady progress and I would once again thank the growing ranks for our membership for their support. Indeed that support is no small part of the reason that we seem to be making good progress.*

*None of us need reminding that with support for agriculture and the methods for accessing it under review never was it more important that producers, particularly in the more fragile areas, make their presence felt. NWCPA is doing precisely that on behalf of its members as this Newsletter shows.*

*Indeed the fact that we have been invited to attend the CAP Reform Stakeholders Conference in Edinburgh and make submissions on cattle issues should be seen as a measure of our credibility in the eyes of the powers that be. That is sound progress in itself.*

*Obviously the challenge is to maintain the momentum of the progress to date – something that is well in hand. We are in the final stages of making the case for funding for a part-time administrator to take forward our long term 3–10 year plans. We believe the ‘case’ we have made is a good one.*

*It goes without saying that for real progress to be made it is fundamental that producers are able to access the kind of financial entitlement that cattle producers need in the areas we represent. Consequently the outcome of the current review of agricultural support is of particular significance to us in these parts. Let us hope somebody is listening.*

*Allan MacRae, NWCPA Chairman*



Kinlochbervie High School Visit to Keoldale Farm

## Keoldale Stock Club Warmly Welcomes Kinlochbervie High School

Many thanks to Jock Sutherland, Farm Manager at Keoldale for running an excellent fieldtrip for the Geography and History classes. ‘Lily the Cow’ is also to be congratulated for her forbearance while 14 pupils took turns clapping her.

In advance of the trip, NWCPA Co-ordinator, Issie MacPhail visited the school and explained that cattle have been part of life in the north west for some 5,000 years. The original wild cattle were called ‘Aurochs’. The last Auroch died in Poland in 1627 so for many centuries domesticated cattle were running alongside wild cattle.

At Keoldale Jock introduced the pupils to a range of breeds and breed characteristics including the classic Beef Shorthorn, Blue Grey, Hereford, Limousin and Simmental. The pupils were able to see that cows bred from the native breeds or crosses had thicker skins and so were able to come through harsh winters more easily than crosses with thinner skins. From the range of calves and cows the characteristics of Limousin, Simmental and Charolais could also be seen – and those breeds’ contribution to ‘liveweight gain’ was explained.

Pupils learned how central cattle have been to Highland history and were reminded that many of the South American ‘gouchos’ and North American cowboys were Highlanders whose cattle skills were highly prized.

Jock showed the Kinlochbervie school group how cattle and sheep graze in different ways. He explained that cattle take longer grasses and plants which sheep can’t use. Sheep tend to take a bit here and there of shorter grasses and herbs. If the longer growth is left it goes ‘rank’ and can choke out other plants. By putting cows on the ground followed by sheep all the animals get a better ‘bite’.

The Keoldale Corncrake Corners were used to illustrate how the cows will enjoy the longer growth. Animals are kept out of the Corncrake Corners until the chicks have gone in September and then the cows are allowed in. Likewise one of the silage parks was not cut until the end of August to provide cover for the birds and chicks. The Stock Club gets payments for carrying out this kind of management.

## NWCPA Winter Meetings

In response to local demand NWCPA has organised a programme of winter meetings in your local area. Everyone is very welcome to attend. This will be a good chance for a bit of socialising as well.

*Entry is FREE for NWCPA members.  
Non-members will be charged £10 but you can join NWCPA at the door on the night and get free entry that way.*

**Mon 6<sup>th</sup> October 7.30pm Durness Village Hall**

### **Key Cattle Health Issues: Presentation & Discussion**

*Led by George Gunn, SAC Vet Services, Inverness*

**Mon 27<sup>th</sup> October 7.30pm Bettyhill Hotel  
Tue 28<sup>th</sup> October 7.30pm Rhiconich Hotel**

### **Feeding Cattle: Maximising Growth & Productivity**

**Presentation & Discussion**  
*Bob Tosh, SAC Agricultural Advisor, Thurso*

**Mon 17<sup>th</sup> November 7.30pm Bettyhill Hotel  
Tue 18<sup>th</sup> November 7.30pm Rhiconich Hotel**

### **Hill Breeds & Marketing: Planning for Profit**

**Presentation & Discussion**  
*Bob Tosh, SAC Agricultural Advisor, Thurso*

## NWCPA Winter Warmers

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November 8pm till late!**

**Durness Village Hall**

### **NWCPA Ceilidh Dance**

*Stovies made with 'Far North Beef' at 'Half-time'*

**FOR TICKETS CONTACT:  
Issie MacPhail or a Committee member**

- NWCPA members & family members - £5 pp
- Non – members £8pp or join NWCPA and get the discount.
- Concessions - £2.50 (members ); £3.50 (non members)

### **Who are the NWCPA Committee?**

Chair	Allan MacRae, Assynt
Vice Chair	Robert MacCall, Eddrachilles
Secretary	Anna MacConnell, Farr
Treasurer	Ted Birchall, Tongue

### **This NWCPA work is supported by:**



**All your enquiries and suggestions are  
very welcome!  
To Contact NWCPA:**

**Issie MacPhail - NWCPA Co-ordinator  
204 Clashmore, Stoer,  
Lochinver, Sutherland IV27 4JQ  
Tel/Fax: 01571 855297  
e-mail: info@nwcpa.org.uk**