

Blue Grey Cattle at Ardjachie

by [Claire Powell](#)

Ardjachie, situated near Tain on the shores of the Dornoch Firth in the North of Scotland, was purchased in 1962 and is farmed in partnership by my son Matthew and myself, now semi-retired I attend mainly to the administration side of the business with Matthew carrying out the day to day running of the farm. We both enjoy working with cattle and sheep.



Ardjachie is on a light sandy soil, and consists of 121 hectares of which 63ha are rotational grassland with the remainder permanent grass and rough grazing. 9ha of seasonal grazing are also taken on an annual basis.



The first Bluegreys were purchased as in-calf heifers, this was followed in 1964 by blue grey bulling heifers from their neighbour Her Grace Anne, Duchess of Westminster at Morangie Farm, Tain, this arrangement continued until her farm was sold in 1985, when this necessitated the purchase from Dingwall Auction, of heifers which had been sourced at Newcastleton the previous October. However, in an attempt to get the numbers and quality of heifers we required, a trip to

Newcastleton Auction Mart was made in 1994 and this has continued every year since except 2001 due to the foot and mouth closure of Auction Markets.



The farm currently runs 104 breeding cows and 17 in-calf heifers; the majority calve down in August / September with the remainder in the spring. The heifers are put to an Aberdeen Angus bull and the cows to the Charolais. We occasionally keep some homebred Angus cross heifers but the herd is predominately Blue Grey.

When the heifers arrive from Newcastleton, they are quarantined for at least three weeks and as members of the HI-Health Ltd cattle health scheme, we routinely blood test for BVD virus, recently we have undertaken a private TB test on the new heifers to ensure no reactors are brought onto the farm. We are lucky in that we do not have any neighbouring cattle thus keeping the herd as closed as possible.

The cows and calves are out wintered on a ration of silage, straw and draff from Glenmorangie Distillery which is near by. The calves are creep fed. Being on light soil, we find the fields don't poach and the feeding areas are reseeded in the spring.

Autumn calves are weaned in late summer, the steers are housed from November until they are sold as forward stores the following spring, most of the heifers are housed and sold prime at around 280kg deadweight. The Angus crosses and some charolais heifers are out wintered.

We also run 70 Scotch Mule ewes which go to a Suffolk tup with lambs sold prime in early autumn. Our main reason for having sheep is to control ragwort on the permanent grazing.

We have remained with the Bluegrey over the years despite the changing fashions because they are ideally suited to our system, being easily out wintered with a good hardy coat, they are easily maintained, have a great mothering ability with plenty of milk, we have very few udder problems and their feet rarely require any maintenance. The Blue grey has great longevity, many cows

lasting well into their teens, this despite producing and rearing Charolais calves year after year. All this is in stark contrast to some continental bred cows we have tried over the years.

The best reason of for keeping the Blue Grey is that we have a standardised herd of cows - all of whom are extremely easy on the eye.

Leslie Taylor