



Mob grazing

Stream Farm

QH2016 & QH2032: 04/05/2022 – 01/03/2023; £16,882.80

Stream Farm is a 100ha holding operating under a share farming structure. There are multiple farm businesses running on the holding, including beef, lamb, pork, chicken, eggs, apple juice, sheepskins, rainbow trout and raw honey. Each farmer receives a share of the gross income, and the remainder is used to cover running costs and equipment. The entire holding is Organic and managed according to regenerative and sustainable principles.

Will Caldwell farms 550 Hampshire Down sheep and 140 Dexter cattle, and expanding on the regenerative ambitions of Stream Farm, Will had undertaken a mob grazing trial, targeting soil health and climate change resilience, as well as livestock welfare.

Mob grazing involves grazing small parcels at high stocking densities for short periods of time (24-48 hours) followed by long rest periods of 60-90 days. It has been shown to boost pasture productivity, increase soil carbon and organic matter, and improve resilience to both drought and heavy rainfall, through reduction in poaching and compaction. Additionally, wildflowers are better able to compete with vigorous grasses as livestock are prevented from selectively grazing and eating regrowth, in turn attracting a range of pollinators, while trampled vegetation makes the pasture more attractive to small mammals.

Livestock should also benefit, firstly from reduced incidence of some common diseases, such as foot rot and parasitic worm infections, both of which are spread between animals through the pasture. Frequently moving the livestock to 'clean' pasture reduces the opportunity for transmission, and long rest periods interrupt the life cycles of worms. Furthermore, the improved resilience of the vegetation allows for more abundant, protein-rich growth.

The trial found that the biggest obstacle to extending the benefits of mob grazing over the whole holding was the labour involved in moving the electric fencing as well as the difficulty of supplying water to the grazing parcels. In many places across the holding, livestock access to water is directly from the stream, which can cause water pollution and damage to riparian habitats. Will therefore applied to FiPL for more efficient electric fencing equipment and to upgrade the water infrastructure on the farm, as well as for a pasture plate meter and soil monitoring.

Stream Farm hosts an annual open day which receives around 1,000 visitors and is well-placed to share knowledge through their connections with the local farming community as well as previous share farmers who have since moved on. They are in the process of applying for a Countryside Stewardship agreement, which will include options to further diversify their grassland. As a farmer who hadn't previously taken part in agri-environment schemes, Will said "we were attracted to the specific and flexible nature of FiPL, particularly within a local context. It was encouraging to be looking at projects that were in line with AONB objectives and would be significantly benefiting the local environment as well as the farm."

