

# Data show 2017 was driest year since 2010

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WE MAY be well through January but I would like to wish you all a happy new year for 2018.

How will the year compare to 2017? We have been able to find out some interesting information about the weather this past year, since we have an automatic Met Office weather station here at Kirkton (between Crianlarich and Tyndrum).

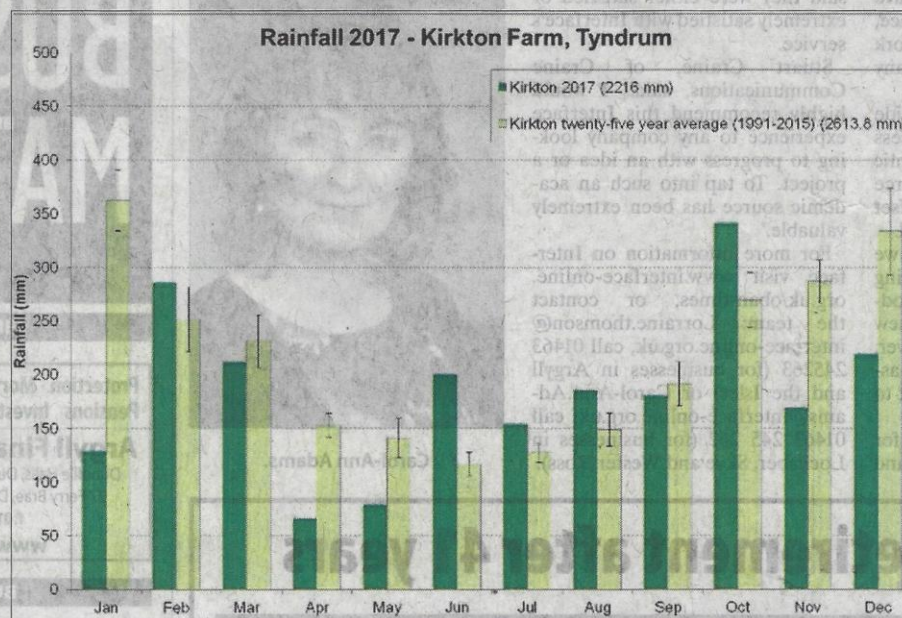
Despite the perceived awful weather, the total rainfall recorded in 2017 was 2,216mm (87 inches), which was considerably less than the 1991-2015 25-year average (2,613.8mm). In fact, 2017 was the driest year since 2010.

The wettest month was October (341 mm or 13.4 inches) and the driest month was April, with 65.4mm of rainfall (only 43 per cent of the 25-year average).

Remember that lovely lambing period we enjoyed? The wettest week was 140mm, between February 19 and 25, and the wettest day was on December 6 (62.6mm in 24 hours).

We also had some interesting temperatures. The lowest temperature recorded during 2017 was on December 11 when it fell to -10.8C. This was the lowest temperature since January 2011. The lowest maximum temperature was recorded on December 10 (-2.3C). This was the only day during 2017 when the temperature failed to rise above freezing.

In contrast, the hottest day was on May 26 (25.7C) and



July was the warmest month with a mean temperature of 13.4C and a mean maximum temperature of 17.3C.

Sleet or snow was recorded falling at the weather station on 23 days during 2017 and lying snow (recorded at 9am) was noted on 26 days.

Unusually, there was only one storm in 2017 when sustained gale force winds were recorded at the farm (January 11) and there were only two days when thunder and lightning were recorded (August 23 and September 29).

I would like to thank the Met Office for supplying us with the daily weather data from its automatic weather station.

These, and the fact that we had good grass growth at the back end of 2016, meant that sheep performance for

2017 has been fine. For our Kirkton research flock (Scottish blackface and Lleyns), the average scanning rate was 1.39 lambs per ewe, and the barren rate was better than some previous years, with seven per cent of ewes not carrying lambs.

We had 727 lambs born out of our 580 ewes, with an average lamb birth weight of 3.8kg. The weaning percentage this year was 1.1 lambs/ewe, and the average lamb weaning weight was 26.6kg. In total, we got 29.3kg lamb weaned per ewe mated.

We are still finalising results for our high hill flock at Auchtertyre, but the year has been good.

The rams have been taken back in in the past couple of weeks and the ewes have

been weighed and wormed.

The condition of the Kirkton BF ewes and the Lleyn ewes is now assessed entirely using their weight and as things stand their weights are still fine, despite the spell of snow and ice we had recently.

Let's see how it goes at scanning in February, which we are now preparing for.

The cattle will start calving in February. We have 24 Aberdeen Angus cross cows which are all scanned in calf to our shorthorn bull, and the eight Highland cows which were in-calf to a shorthorn bull when we bought them in November. We will calve the Aberdeen Angus in the shed here at Kirkton, and the Highlanders will calve outside.

Here's hoping that the weather is good for them!