

PEAK EWE NUTRITION AT LAMBING



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As we head into December, lambing is not too far away especially for early flocks lambing from January onwards. Some Autumn lambing Dorset flocks already have lambs on the ground.

Now is the time to plan your sheep feed requirements to make sure you are prepared to fully meet the ewe's requirements to ensure a successful lambing season.

Nutrition hugely affects all aspects of sheep health and production throughout the year. Poor nutrition has negative effects on ovulation rate, early embryonic losses, lamb vigour and survival rate, pregnancy toxemia (twin lamb disease), and passive transfer of antibodies through colostrum. A reduction in any or all these factors will ultimately affect the number of lambs born, reared and sold, affecting the profitability of the flock.

One of the main limiting factors impacting nutrition is dry matter intakes (DMI), physically how much a ewe can eat. It is generally thought that a ewe will have a DMI around 1.5-1.8kg dry matter per day, with all the nutrient requirements having to be supplied in this small amount. A ewe in the last few weeks of pregnancy will have a reduced DMI as the size of the ewe's rumen is significantly reduced due to the growing lambs in the abdomen.

One of the major factors affecting DMI is access to forage and hard feed once ewes are housed so make sure they have sufficient trough space.

For housed sheep on ad lib forage, the requirement is 15cm of feed space per ewe and 45cm feed space when concentrate feeding. Other factors that will affect DMI are body condition score, lameness, the dry matter content and type of forage being fed and access to water.

Maximising DMI is key to ensuring we meet the ewe's requirements and getting the correct balance of the main nutrients, protein and energy. The requirement for both increases during the last third of the pregnancy, just when DMI is reduced meaning diets need careful planning.

Protein

Dietary protein is essential for udder development, having an influence on colostrum and milk produced and lamb birth weights. A good source of bypass protein (DUP) is preferable when concentrate feeding in the run-up to lambing as it will benefit colostrum quality and quantity, and milking ability. Rumen Degradable protein (RDP) is also important for rumen health, so the correct balance of DUP and RDP is important. When balancing a ewe's diet it is important to get the correct overall protein but also to assess the protein sources and making sure you have got adequate DUP.

Energy

Energy is vital for lamb growth and the ewe's milk production. Sources of energy can come in many different forms with some being rapidly digested and others more slowly.

The balance of energy sources needs to be correct in the run-up to lambing to ensure there are no deficiencies. Energy deficiencies will lead to the breakdown of body fat by the ewe which releases ketones and contributes to the development of twin lamb disease.

Other nutrients and trace elements required by the ewe during pregnancy and for her to supply to the lamb include:

- Selenium is involved in the thyroid function, immunity and embryo survival.
- Cobalt is involved in immunity, milk production and lamb vigour.
- Iodine is required for thyroid function, embryo survival, lamb vigour and brown fat utilisation.
- Calcium for normal ewe metabolism
- Vitamin E for repairing and preventing cell damage and aiding immune function.

These nutrients/trace elements must be supplemented accurately as toxicities can easily occur, especially for copper. It is always worth assessing the mineral status with a blood test for ewes pre-tupping and pre-lambing, to develop a picture of what is going on within your flock and on your farm.

Our 19% Pre Lamber + Lifeline diet contains the correct balance of raw materials such as soya and sugarbeet with the added benefit of Lifeline minerals to aid the ewe at lambing with watery births, correct lamb presentation and improving colostrum quality.

Speak to your Feed Specialist to discuss our range of ewe feeds and lamb creep feeds this season and getting your forages tested to make sure you are prepared.

Farming thoughts

Where has this year gone?! Let's face it, it's been a tough one. One thing is for sure, the weather hasn't helped. A wet, cold spring followed by six weeks of baking hot weather and apart from two dry weeks at the beginning of September and October, it's rained ever since!

Cattle and lambs haven't grown this year as well, as like us, they need sun on their backs! The cereal harvest was also challenging, and new sown crops are looking rather yellow.

So, 2024 can only get better! Beef and lamb prices are holding up well, with more exports to the continent. The future milk price is looking promising for the Spring. It all boils down to supply and demand. At the latest GDT auction, cheddar was up 4.5% and future milk prices on the stone x platform are looking up, 3-4 ppl by April. It isn't the animals fault milk prices and forage quality aren't where they should be, but let's be positive, there's plenty of light at the end of the tunnel.

It has also been a challenging year in the agricultural supply sector. Wars, global weather, politics, and currency have all played their part in this. We will keep supplying fixed formulated diets and source quality, value for money products from Massey Harpers.

The investment in our staff is paying off. I would like to congratulate Matt Dymond on winning the National SQP Nutritionist of the Year award last month.

On behalf of the directors and staff at Harpers and Massey Harpers, may I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. And remember, we are only at the end of a phone.



Glen Johns
Sales Director
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GRAIN AND STRAIGHTS

Cereals

It is predicted that approximately 78% of UK wheat plantings are complete with 26% below average conditions and only 35% in good or excellent conditions. Predictions are that we will see around a 12MT wheat crop in the UK in 2024, down from 14MT this year. French plantings are also down, and it has been reported that they will produce a sub 30MT wheat crop compared with a 35MT crop this year.

New crop wheat is already a premium to old crop trading at around £200/t ex-combine. UK wheat is £10/t under export values as a plentiful supply of Russian wheat is keeping global prices down. Growers are reluctant sellers, particularly with the new crop premium. Spring cereal seed is in short supply with some suppliers already sold out after the poor harvest last year.

Fibres

With the shortage of soya in Argentina, soya hulls are a premium until we see new crop next May. Sugar Beet is plentiful and the UK crop just keeps getting bigger with this wet weather – as long as they can get it off the field. With winter demand now kicking in, prices for other products such as wheat gluten and wheatfeed are starting to firm.

Proteins

Soya has increased by around £50/t over the past month with tight supplies from Argentina, and major weather concerns in Brazil. If the rains arrive in time this could save the crop, but ultimately yields will be affected. We were expecting a 163MT crop, but this is likely to be reduced to sub 160MT, compared to 158MT last year. Argentina is predicted to produce 48MT compared to 25MT last year, so Argentina should make up any shortfall and supply will hopefully be plentiful and prices should ease early next year.

Rape has also rallied and is now trading in the early £300's up around £40/t from early November. This is on the back of the soya rally, but also lack of supply with reduced production from crushers in Europe which will hopefully change early next year.

For more information, call the office on 01409 254 300.



Andrew Davies
Operations Director
01409 254 300

UNDERSTANDING BEEF CARBON FOOTPRINT

We have started looking at carbon footprinting in beef production. A group of farmers have been audited by a company specialising in producing accurate carbon data.

One of our customers has allowed us to share the results of their 100 head of calves, milk to finish enterprise.

The calves are all out of Holstein/ Friesian cows put to a high EBV beef bulls. The calves are reared in the autumn and are turned out to grass in the spring at 200-250kgs. They are rotationally grazed on mixed swards.

The cattle are housed in early October weighing 400-450kgs. They are fed a mixed ration of grass silage and oat wholecrop. Steers were fed 2.5kg rolled barley, 2.5kg Harpers 22% Molassed Mix while heifers received 1.5kg rolled barley, 1.5kg Harpers 22% Molassed Mix. Target growth rates are 1.4kg/day for steers and 1.2 kg/day for heifers.

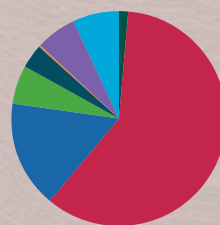
The chart below shows a very impressive figure of 15kgs/ CO₂/kg deadweight beef. This is made up principally of enteric methane. If we can find an additive that will reduce this figure by 30%, as claimed by one company, we will be able to reduce CO₂ by 3kgs per kg deadweight beef. Other figures are low with feed and forage at 16% and low fertiliser use accounting for 9.4% of emissions.

With farmers making consistent progress on raising Soil Organic Carbon level, most grassland farmers using this type of system would be carbon positive, putting more CO₂ into the soil than they are emitting.

The key message is the lower the carbon footprint is, the more efficient and profitable you will be.

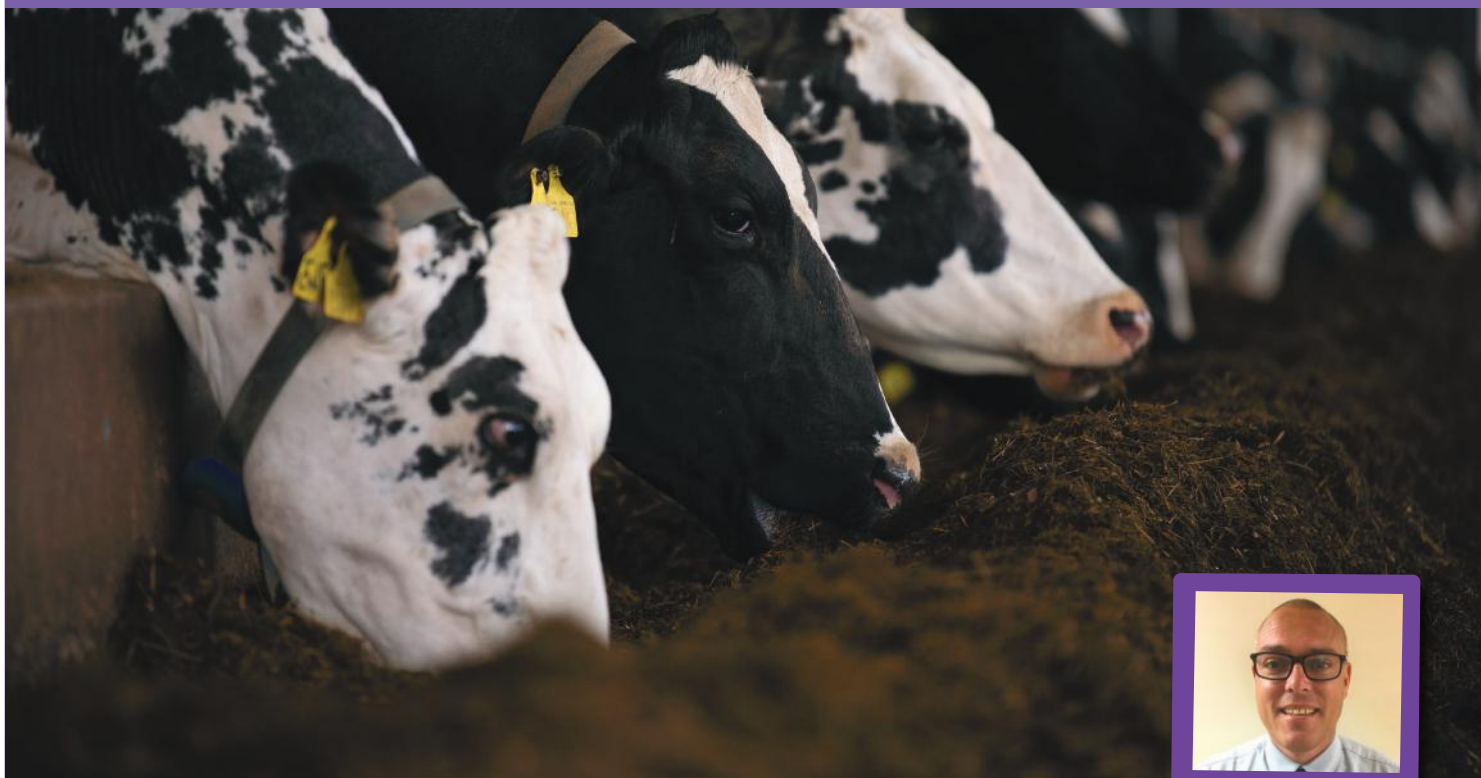
For more information, talk to you Feed Specialist.

- Organic Fertiliser Application (N20): 7.1%
- Manure Management (N20): 6.1%
- Manure Management (CH4): 0.3%
- Inorganic Fertiliser Production (N20): 3.5%
- Inorganic Fertiliser Application (N20): 5.9%
- Feed & Forage: 16.1%
- Enteric Fermentation (CH4): 59.6%
- Pre-Farm Emissions: 1.3%



Bill Harper
Director
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FEEDING FOR MILK QUALITY THIS WINTER SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM BUT LITRES MAY BE!



Richard Waters
Ruminant Feed Specialist &
Development Manager
07467 955 130

“Silage quantity is now getting somewhere close to the desired amounts, however, the quality this year is yet again down on last. We have looked at the previous data from years of records and what is apparent is that following a winter of snow fall we end up making the best silage. This indicates the grass plants are tired and need recharging as they have had no rest continuing to grow all year round.”

Sound familiar? These words are taken from my last article in October and are worth reiterating. Once again, we are looking at a winter where we need silages to fire and they're far from it. On the flip side, milk supply to the processors is down and forward prospects look like they are firming.

Going back to my October newsletter where the first cuts were less than impressive, as an average the second, third and fourth cuts have followed in much the same vein. Average first cut was 11.1ME, second cuts are looking to be around 10.8ME with third and fourth cuts in the low 10's to the late 9'sME.

Maize harvest has bucked the trend in terms of starch, with a high percent being recorded. We are yet to understand if this is because the cob to plant ratio last year was low, whereas this year we have a higher cob to plant ratio and the algorithm is confused. For example, 35% dry matter maize with 50% starch (wheat grain only 60%) and only 10.5ME!

Anyone who has included fresh maize in the diet has seen a lift in performance suggesting the fault lies with the testing and not the forage.

Milk quality is very good and early results suggest fertility is very positive, so while pence per litre is less than desired, we will have cows pregnant for next year. We mustn't lose sight of these economic results, as while they aren't in the forefront of minds, they are having huge effects on profitability and methane reduction which slowly but surely we are being judged upon, regardless of our milk contract.

So, what's helping? Well, in many instances a direct energy increase has paid for itself. For example, adding more fat (Megalac) is having an effect increasing litres and milk protein. While just over £1000/t, they are proving beneficial and cost-effective.

Protein balance is also requiring attention with many of the earlier cuts low in protein while the later cuts are high. Molasses protein blends are helping with rumen fermentation and lifting the lower end silages to the required basal protein levels.

High maize inclusion diets on the back of larger than normal crops are helping to lift the MP (microbial protein). Fizzing up these high NDF silages whilst also addressing the lack of grass forage in the clamp is in many instances paying dividends. Do not be afraid of feeding a 70 - 80% maize diet.

In Europe these are commonplace and deliver

great results when carefully balanced. Opening two or three clamps of grass silage is also being considered. Providing we can get across the face of the silage in 3-4 days, this works well to introduce the protein from the later cuts while not diluting the ME from the earlier cuts significantly.

With one eye on current buying habits and one eye on milk contracts Harpers together with Masseys are pushing forward with our search for the solutions to carbon and methane reductions. The Planet range of feeds has been accepted at industry level as the first zero soya range of feeds with the low CO₂ figures. We are now looking to enhance this range by the inclusion of a methane inhibitor. We are in the process of trialling new diets that will give us data to present to you all in the new year. It stands to reason that until producers are going to be paid for these reductions, this is on the back burner. Rest assured when we are given the green light, we will be able to demonstrate the benefits from this trial work and help you achieve the additional payments offered.

As always, keep testing the silages and make little single tweaks to achieve the desired benefits. Please ask your Harpers Feeds Specialist for any help.

CREEP FEEDING LAMBS TO HIT THE EARLY MARKETS

Hitting the market at the right time can make a significant difference to the value of lambs. Early sales of creep fed lambs can see a greater return on investment by selling when supply is tight and prices are higher.

When feeding to meet these early markets, set a target of finishing 70% of lambs by the second week in July. This is usually when prices start to drop, as grass-fed lambs start to come into the market.

Young lambs are the most efficient converters of feed so offering creep from two weeks old is important to achieve the early growth rates. The Feed Conversion Ratio in young lambs is about 3.5:1 – for every 3.5kg of creep eaten the lamb will gain 1kg of liveweight. However post-weaning this drops to 7:1 and continues to fall as the lambs get older.

Not only will lambs achieve better daily liveweight gain by creep feeding, but the Killing Out percent at deadweight will also be improved. This can add extra value through better finished weights and carcass confirmation.

Targeting lambs for the earlier market can have other benefits to the farm as a large percentage of the lamb crop can be off the farm within 3-5 months. This will free up grazing for other stock or for silage making when grass growth can be restricted.

Harpers Lamb Start 2 Finish Pellets and Rapid Lamb Pellets are formulated to supply the optimum balance of protein, energy, vitamins and minerals to achieve these high growth rates, ensuring lambs can be finished quickly.

For more information on creep feeding your lambs, please speak to your Harpers Feeds Specialist.



CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS

We are only **closed** on **Christmas Day**, **Boxing Day**, and **New Year's Day** but our normal delivery days may be subject to change.

The last order date before Christmas is **Tuesday 12th December** and the last order date before New Year is **Tuesday 19th December**.

Please help us to help you by providing as much spread as possible during the holiday season. Thank you for your co-operation.

Everyone at Harpers Feeds and Massey Harpers wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

MATT WINS NATIONAL AWARD

Congratulations to our Feed Specialist, Matt Dymond who won the Nutritional Expertise Award at the recent National SQP awards in London.

Matt is passionate about working with customers to get the best performance from their system and livestock through careful rationing and appropriate treatments. He focuses on making customers aware of the importance of correct dose rates of animal health products to avoid over or under-dosing and the knock-on effects of doing this.

Matt encourages customers to use the Massey Harpers in-house faecal egg count service to assess the resistance levels on farm, helping determine the correct product, at the correct time with the correct dose rate.

In addition to his work with Massey Harpers, Matt runs his own flock of 240 ewes at West Penquite, where he makes all the breeding and flock health decisions.

A very well-deserved award!



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Date	Event	Location
Wednesday 6th December	Truro Primestock Show	Truro Livestock Market, TRI IRH
Wednesday 6th December	Massey Harpers Birthday Open Day	Massey Harpers, EX22 6FU 8am-8pm
Saturday 13th January 2024	Bideford VS Paignton To book, call 01409 254 300	Bideford Rugby Club, EX39 2QS 12.30pm (In conjunction with Torch Vets)



Harpers Feeds

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