



## MAXIMISING GRASS THIS SPRING

**With spring soon approaching it is now time to start planning the transition to grass. The key areas to focus on when the cows are turned out are, maximising milk yield from grazing, while ensuring that fertility isn't compromised, and the cows are looked after.**

Overwintered grass typically analyses with high ME and protein values due to the growth stages of the plants. However, with the recent weather grass dry matters are on the lower side. Feeding the grass and practically accessing it with field conditions like they are, will have their own challenges. On a practical level, it is crucial to minimise poaching, and also eliminate back grazing, allowing the plants to recover for the second grazing round.

Over the coming weeks the farm should be walked to determine the overall farm covers and also which paddocks would be suitable for grazing. Ground conditions should also be assessed to plan the drier fields to graze first. The aim is to start on-off grazing as early as possible to ensure that grass growth doesn't get in front of the cows. Through the use of on-off grazing and buffer feeding we should aim, when ground conditions allow, to graze 60% of the farm platform by the end of March.

The whole farm grazing platform should be grazed before the end of April to then start the second grazing round before covers get too far in front of the cows. Cows should be entering covers of 2500-2750 kg/ha, 'mid welly boot' and then leaving paddocks at 1500 kg/ha, 'ankle high'. Dependant on sward type and variety.

This prevents the swards being eaten down too tightly to allow quicker regrowth, but ensuring cover entries are of the suitable plant growth stage of 3 leaves. An example of this is for paddocks to be grazed from 10-12cm down to 4-5cm in height to fully utilise the amount of grass provided.

When adding new forages into the diet it will mean that the rumen will have to adjust to accommodate this. The rumen will take 3 weeks to adjust so suitable forage buffering should occur during this time to allow the cows to smoothly transition onto the fresh grass. This will allow the cow to fully utilise the highly nutritious forage that has been added to the diet. Buffering will allow the farm to hit the target grazed areas without compromising dry matter intakes, ensuring we are looking after our cows, while still achieving optimum milk yield from forage. Cows should be able to consume 5kg of DM, (Dry Matter) in 3 to 4 hours, so on and off grazing can hit DM targets alongside other forages before night and day grazing can commence.

Having the correct concentrate to compliment the fresh grass and buffer forages at turn out is vital. Spring grass and well managed grassland will provide good levels of rumen degradable protein and energy throughout the season. However the rumen will be unable to utilise all the protein leading to high levels of ammonia in the rumen. Consequently, this is reflected in high milk urea levels. This can lead to other issues, such as cows wasting energy through disposing of excess urea, leaving less energy for milk production. Microbial protein (MP) is made up of two areas, MPN and MPE.

The supplementary feeds need to complement the grazed grass with a high proportion of (MPE) microbial protein energy, as grass is higher in (MPN) microbial protein nitrogen, which is why we see the rise in milk urea's. The limiting factor to milk production at grass is the MPE you can supply the cow. To increase the microbial protein energy in the diet, more rumen energy sources (starch, sugar and degradable fibre) should be fed. However, care must be taken to ensure that the rumen is not provided with too much 'fast and fizzy' nutrients, such as wheat and barley which risk rumen acidosis. This is why it is important to buffer feed at turnout to provide longer fibre sources rather than just fresh lush grass with little fibre.

Our Creamfield + Novatan range complements buffer feeding at turnout perfectly by optimising protein release in the rumen. Novatan has been proven to aid the utilisation of excess protein (nitrogen) in the rumen.

Another vital area to consider is the supplementation of magnesium during this period, as we want to reduce any possibility of grass staggers affecting the cows. Remember, cows cannot store magnesium, so they need it supplemented every day. Massey Harpers stock magnesium chloride flakes for daily feeding at 150g per cow.

**For more information, speak to your Feed Specialist.**



**Alex Cornish**  
Ruminant Feed  
Specialist  
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# Farming thoughts

**Every new year brings fresh new challenges.**

Many of you would have received your latest single farm payment which we all know is being reduced in time. Don't be afraid at looking at the various environmental schemes to make up the payments, GS4 mixes for example can be used in intensive livestock systems. This won't hold your business back, but by ticking the right boxes, you can certainly make up the shortfalls in payments.

Our Planet range of feeds are performing extremely well on farms and after speaking to an Arla representative this morning I am excited to see where this range goes. They confirmed that there is still no Hi pro soya in any docks in the South of the UK that ticks their box on sustainability and segregation at source.

We are excited to have David Davies, the independent silage expert as our guest speaker for our three on farm meetings at the beginning of March. It will be interesting to hear his views on silage making, chop length and why we get so many early 1st cut silage clamps slipping. Keep your eyes peeled for further details.

To end on a positive note, raw materials are looking good for a future price drop in May.



**Glen Johns**  
Sales Director  
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## GRAIN AND STRAIGHTS

**With lower plantings of winter cereals across most of Europe, new crop continues to be a premium over old crop making growers reluctant sellers for this season.**

Downward pressure remains on grains although there is a shortage of barley locally, but not nationwide, with a lot of malting barley failing on quality. Barley price is now export competitive and we have seen shipments from the South Coast destined for Europe. UK wheat is currently the dearest in Europe which should help keep prices down. December saw Ukraine's biggest export month since the war began with 6.1 M tonnes being exported out of Odesa. Russian wheat exports were a record in 2023, due to their large crop and weak Ruble. Grain maize continues to be very competitive going forward trading only £10 per tonne over wheat – due to the large US crop – and does look an attractive buy. The gap between wheat and barley continues to widen and the likelihood is that we could see a premium of £25 to £30 per tonne for wheat over barley on the new crop.

As we are in the critical growing stage for soya in South America, the Argentinian crop has been upgraded to 50 million tonnes (25 MT last year), but the Brazilian crop keeps getting downgraded with current estimates ranging from 143 million tonnes to 161 million tonnes (161 MT last year).

With summer soya prices in the late £300's, down £100 per tonne from the winter, prices do look attractive, and it would be recommended to have some cover. If the Brazilian crop is downgraded any further due to their drought this could fuel prices. If we look at soya meal prices in dollar terms, they are the lowest they have been since September 2021.

The Red Sea issues are causing some problems with some ingredients, such as molasses, micro ingredients, and other products from the middle east with longer more expensive shipping, due to not being able to go through the Suez Canal.

At the end of the year we see a change in legislation in Europe which is likely to affect the UK as well. Certain products including soya and palm will not be able to be sourced from land deforested since 2020. Until this is resolved

Soya and Palm products cannot be purchased past the end of December 2024 without contractual restrictions.



**Andrew Davies**  
Operations Director  
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## HIGHLIGHTS EWE NEED TO KNOW

**We have recently held our annual sheep meetings at Trethorne and South Molton rugby club with both evenings being well attended.**

Our external speakers were Laura Eyles from Signet who discussed how Signet work within the industry and the benefits of using Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) when selecting/purchasing rams to work on your ewes. Rams can be selected based on their EBVs such as litter size, maternal ability, eight-week weight (KG), growth rates to 21 weeks of age, muscle depth, fat depth and mature size. Whether you are a closed flock and keeping your own ewe lambs as replacements, or selling lambs deadweight/liveweight, these values are useful to know and access as they can have an influence on the productivity of your flock.

The second speaker of the evening was Rachel Mallet from Bimeda, who presented the lifecycle of sheep scab, the best treatment protocols should your flock become infected. Quarantine measures were also discussed to prevent flock from infection. The mite *Psoroptes Ovis* can survive for relatively long periods of time off the host sheep (up to 17 days) and can therefore spread via other avenues such as contaminated fields, equipment etc.

Correct diagnosis is important to ensure the appropriate route of treatment. A skin scrape taken by a vet from the edges of an established scab lesion and examined under a microscope will give a diagnosis. A blood test is also available to detect antibodies by the sheep in response to the infection, this method can be useful in early stages before lesions appear.

Treatment measures are either injectables or plunge dipping, the correct route should be carefully discussed. Please speak to our team of Feed Specialists/RAMAs if you would like to find out more on either topic.



**Matt Dymond**  
Ruminant Feed Specialist  
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# NUTRITION IS KEY FOR A SUCCESSFUL GAME SEASON

**With another shooting season coming to an end, the game industry has regained some positivity and confidence as the preparation starts again for the 2024 breeding and rearing season.**

In most cases the breeding performance is determined before the first egg is laid. Both hens and cocks should be selected for breeding using factors such as body weight, condition and overall health status; including the use of blood testing to reduce the risks of diseases such as Mycoplasma.

It is critical to maintain bird health throughout the laying season and nutrition has an important role in doing this. The Massey County Game Breeder pellets aim to maximise egg quality and production whilst supporting optimum fertility and hatchability. Diets are formulated to precise energy and protein levels, specifically looking at the amino acid balance and the use of quality protein sources.

Good egg-shell quality is vitally important throughout the laying period if a high percentage of eggs are to hatch into prolific chicks. This is achieved with a balanced supply of calcium and phosphorus, enhanced vitamin and mineral levels and the recent addition of Calcium Pidolate to the Massey Game Breeder diets.

It is advisable to work closely with your vet to develop a health plan to manage the risk of disease within breeding birds. Regular worming through the feed will reduce the risk of poor bird health and limit impacts on performance.

After the successful rear of 2023 and with most shoots fulfilling all their days, the projection of reduced feed costs and other inputs will create positivity amongst game farmers and shoots. No doubt there will be new challenges ahead, but I feel we are in a stronger position to make 2024 another successful season.

**For more information on our Game Breeding diets and how we can help you prepare for next season call us on 01409 254 300.**



**Myles Jones**  
Ruminant and Game  
Feed Specialist  
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## MYTH-BUSTING MILK POWDER MISCONCEPTIONS

**Milk powders are an excellent alternative to whole milk when looking at rearing calves, however we often come across misconceptions related to milk replacers and the benefits of feeding a good quality powder. Let's look at some facts...**

### WHOLE MILK IS BETTER THAN MILK REPLACER!

It is a common misconception that even a good quality milk replacer is not as good as whole milk in terms of calf growth rates and performance. However independent studies have demonstrated that this is not the case. If formulated correctly with good-quality ingredients, calf growth and rumen development on a milk replacer diet is comparable to a whole milk diet. The key is to pay attention to all of the variables. These include milk replacer quality, concentration and correct mixing, temperature and volume.

### HEIFERS FED HIGHER LEVELS OF MILK/ MILK REPLACER LAY DOWN FAT IN THE UDDER WHICH CAN COMPROMISE FUTURE PERFORMANCE!

Evidence contradicts this, showing that calves fed higher levels of milk replacer produce more milk in the first lactation. This is due to the Epigenetic changes that can only take place in early stages of the calves development and is dependant on the calf receiving a high level of nutrition in that period.

### FEEDING MORE MILK REPLACER IS GOING TO COST ME MORE MONEY!

Yes, but only in the short term. Calves grow more quickly, reaching target weight earlier. This is the most efficient time to grow the frame. A well-fed calf is a healthy calf and is more able to fight disease which saves time and money on vet's bills.

At Harpers, we support our own industry which is why we only stock Trouw Nutrition and Volac milk powders made using British milk. Ask your Harpers Feed Specialist about our range of British manufactured milk replacers and how to achieve the best results from feeding it.

### CALVES CAN ONLY DRINK 2-3L PER FEED!

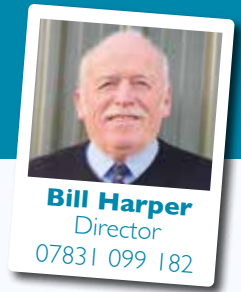
The abomasum can significantly increase in capacity. Studies have shown that a three-week-old calf can consume up to 6.5 L of milk in one meal without milk entering the rumen or any indications of abdominal pain or discomfort. The abomasum has a high capacity to accommodate fluids significantly greater than 2-3L at a time. Their muck is likely to be looser on high milk levels, but loose muck is not a scour. Calves have been underfed to achieve their full potential for years! 2L twice a day is only close to maintenance level and not enough to enable the calf to grow to its potential or develop a good immune system.

## SPECIAL OFFER

Throughout February and March, buy a full pallet of Calfridge Glow or Calfridge Gold and get **TWO FREE** bags!



# BRITISH CATTLE BREEDERS CONFERENCE: THE HIGHLIGHTS



**The British Cattle Breeders Conference in Telford presented an incredible cast of speakers, the theme was Green Genes, and every aspect of breeding, management, nutrition and health was covered in fascinating detail. I can only give you some of the standout messages we took home from the conference.**

For the first time we now have access to National Beef Evaluations, which will allow farmers to compare performance across breeds, until now all breeds had their own system and you could not compare. Andrew Laughton finishes 5000 cattle a year and has compared different sires and found a difference of .4 kg liveweight gain per day through the finishing period between different sires all fed on the same ration. Ian Farrant finishes 600 dairy bred calves a year and is convinced that colostrum quality and quantity has a massive effect on the growth of calves. Richard Barbour from Scotland keeps suckler cows and does dairy beef, he finds by using both systems he gets the best out of his farm, with some land needing suckler cows and better land doing dairy X cattle best. The star of the show was undoubtedly Prof John Gilligan, the Northern Irishman who is now advising AHDB. He gave a fascinating presentation about his work using LIDAR technology to map levels of carbon both above and below the ground. With the base measurements in place his trial group are now developing their production systems

to capture carbon and improve the health and efficiency in their livestock. He explained how the journey to net zero has to accurately assess the sequestration every farm is achieving and put it against the emissions on the farm. The big argument is how methane is calculated with GWP (Global Warming Potential) 100 being compared to the more recent calculation of GWP\* which has been accepted by the scientific community but has not as yet been accepted by the IPCC (International Committee on Climate Change). With most ruminant systems producing 60% of their emissions as enteric methane, this is a big issue for us all.

Managing Director of Germinal Seeds Paul Billings gave an insight into the work going on developing new strains of grass and particularly clover which will help increase protein utilisation in ruminant diets.

There is a new red clover coming called Red Runner which is the first double rooted clover which will increase its resistance to temporary adverse conditions. A developed strain of Birdsfoot Trefoil suitable for GS4 Mixes (Herbal Leys) is showing interesting results in reducing Methane production and bloat while still acting as an anthelmintic. The final session of the day was given by Prof Sharon Huws Director of Research at Belfast University. She explored the world of enteric fermentation and discussed ways of improving rumen health and production.

She also looked at the mode of action of the various products being trialled to reduce Methane emissions from the rumen.

What is needed is a product or combination of products that will improve performance and reduce Methane production at the same time. We shall be watching these developments carefully as we prepare for a time in the not-too-distant future when our customers demand to see the actions, we are taking to mitigate emissions. The first step I would suggest you take is to measure through a Carbon Calculator where your farm is at this moment in time. When you have done this, it may become apparent the areas to focus on to make your farm more efficient and edge closer to Net Zero.

Look at combining your forward plan with your Stewardship or Sustainable Farming Incentive plan. There is a great opportunity to maintain production, reduce fertilizer usage, replace the Single Farm Payment and farm in a more sustainable way going forward.

My definition of sustainability is it must be, profitable, acceptable for the people involved and be good for the environment. This can be done with careful thought, good planning, and a willingness to accept change.

Please contact me if you want me to e-mail you any of the presentations I have talked about.



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Event	Date	Location
20th- 21st February	Farm and Country Field Days	Royal Cornwall Showground, PL27 7JE
26th February	Devon Cattle Breeders Show and Sale	Sedgemoor Market, TA6 6DF
29th February	Game Feed Meeting – Invite only - TBC	Harpers Feeds, Holsworthy, EX22 6ER
2nd March	Wadebridge VS Truro sponsored rugby game	Wadebridge, PL27 6AQ - KO 2.30pm
5th-7th March	Forage Management Events	TBC



### Harpers Feeds

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