

## NEW SEASON: NEW CHALLENGES

**Whichever processor you are supplying, it has never been more important to protect butterfat and protein seasonal depressions, as this is a sure way to help offset dropping farmgate prices. Couple this with working to reduce emissions and in some cases remove soya products from your diets makes for an interesting time ahead. So, no pressure then?**

Thanks to four years of trials Harpers is in a great place to help you and your cows through whatever processors throw your way. We have had extensive dialogue with the processors and are positioned for all circumstances.

During our recent Planet Roadshows I mentioned this year's silage and grazing season. I appreciate several of you will have bought fertiliser when prices were high so this may be uncomfortable reading. The average crude protein from our analysis of 2022 first cut silages was a little over 12%. There are a number of reasons behind this, but we must learn from them. Protein raw materials have never been so volatile so we must take this into our own hands to help negate cost.

Timely fertiliser application is key, combined with routine grass testing, especially pre-mowing. The Harpers team are fully geared up to analyse fresh grazing and cutting grass so please get in touch with your Feed Specialist to collect samples and prepare diets for you. Apply the full amount of fertiliser. Please do not scrimp even with the expensive stuff, it will still be the most economic choice.

Focus on clamp management to prevent losses - good consolidation, film, and plastic sheet to create an oxygen barrier. Use a sharp shear grab for face preservation.

All these elements will maximise retention of the valuable protein harvested.

Sometimes you must go back to the basics when looking ahead. I have written previously of measures that can be implemented on farm, but it does no harm to revisit some of the most cost-effective ones. It goes without saying that diet formulation is important but, attention to detail at these times of real stress will offer excellent rewards.

### MY CHECK LIST FOR 2023

- 1 Make sure water is abundant and most importantly clean.**  
The average cow will need up to 140 litres of clean water a day. If necessary, use additional troughs or take mobile water tanks to far ends of grazing platforms as cows will not walk to water if it's too hot. This on many units is the biggest limiting factor through the summer months.
- 2 Offer a small buffer pre- and post-milking, using a high dry matter forage such as hay, haylage or wholecrop to help slow down the fizzy grass through the rumen.**  
It's also a good place to hide Magnesium Chloride for cold wet grazing conditions. This is preferred to putting it in the water as the cows do not drink as much as it's bitter.
- 3 Pre-mow rich grass swards to improve dry matter intakes.** Mow enough grass for 24 hours and use a strip wire to manage the amount of grass allocated. Allow 11-12kg DM per cow per day (55-60kg FW).

- 4 In exceptional heat, consider grazing by night and allow access to housing in the day as the sheds will offer escape from the direct sunlight.**
- 5 As appetite decreases in times of heat stress increase the energy density of the buffer feeds to help plug the energy gap and prevent excessive weight loss.**
- 6 Offer Sodium Bicarbonate, not salt, in buckets around the milking shed, to promote saliva production to help buffer the rumen and increase water intakes**
- 7 Use water misters or sprinklers (old sprayer boom!) for the cows particularly in collecting yards where cows are packed in tightly**
- 8 Fans. For you and the cows! Moving hot air away from the cows is a must, use either large helicopter style fans or the large sock type extractor units.**
- 9 Start fly protection before they get a stronghold. Cows tormented by flies become unsettled and unproductive. Start the routine early in the season and continue to apply at the recommended intervals through to housing. The RAMA advisors at Harpers Farm Supplies can guide you through the choice of fly control, wormers etc. Use our faecal egg counting service for the complete package.**

**For more information about any of these points, speak to your Feed Specialist.**



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# FINISHING YOUR CATTLE ON A HIGH

**Who would have thought beef would be £5 per kilo deadweight with premiums added in. There are two main reasons for this.**

Firstly, the numbers of cattle are tight. Many suckler herds have been sold at a good cull cow price. The number of beef crosses from the dairy herd has not been sufficient to make up the loss of suckler bred calves.

Secondly, the costs of finishing in the autumn looked high. Farmers looked at 350-400kg cattle and thought to run them through the winter on forage, selling them as spring stores. Those of you who were brave and put them on a finishing diet have really reaped the rewards with 350kg deadweight carcasses returning £1750 with no commission.

We have studied the results of the rations we advised in the autumn. The top performers growing cattle at 1.4-1.5kg/day fed diets containing two forages. All are using grass silage with an ME over 10.8 and then added either maize silage or wholecrop silage.

One interesting performer has been spring oats and peas silage yielding 12t/acre at 20% starch with performance belying the analysis. The body condition and shine has really impressed in those cattle.

If the forages are good enough 1.4 kg LWG/day has been achieved with only 3kg of concentrates for heifers and 5kg for steers, who can regularly exceed 1.5kg LWG/day. When you look at Feed Conversion Efficiency, these animals are performing exceptionally well.

The best growth and feed efficiency comes from younger cattle, put into finish at 12-14 month and finished at 18-20 months.

Cattle older than this eat considerably more and do not grow as fast.

With beef remaining a key ingredient in 50% of main and eat out meals, demand has been consistently strong. We need to continue to develop systems that are feed efficient through good diets and genetics.

**Speak to your Harpers Feed Specialist for more details.**

	DMI (kg)
9kg grass silage 11.0ME 32% DM	2.9
6kg wholecrop oats/peas 9.0 ME 55% DM	3.3
2.5kg rolled barley	2.2
2.5kg Harpers 22% Protein Mix	2.2
TOTAL DMI	10.6
DLWG (kg)	1.5
Feed Conversion (kgDMI/kgDLWG)	7:1

## Farming thoughts

**Bad press about farming continues to hit the headlines- and now our MPs want to get rid of sheep! There needs to be a massive shake up at the top. Civil servants and politicians in Whitehall not only run the country, they will end up ruining it.**

The NFU must be encouraged to raise our concerns, and those sectors fortunate enough to still have organisations that specifically represent them such as the NBA and NSA need your enthusiastic support.

Senior officials don't seem to care about food security – DEFRA don't even have a definition of the term. There is no better and natural food source than animals grazing the planet.

Whilst talking planet, thanks to the 230 farmers who attended our Planet roadshows which showed Harpers at its best- ahead of the game. Lots of positive feedback from customers and prospects. Many Arla producers are switching to the range, while other processors are looking at it closely. It's a case of when, not if.

Our feed prices will continue to come down in the coming months. We have price drops scheduled for 1st April and again 1st May. As and when we buy more cereals, our prices should come down.

Don't forget to take advantage of our early order offer on bale

and silage sheets and harvesting products at Harpers Farm Supplies. Making the most of milk from forage has never been so important.



## GRAIN AND STRAIGHTS

**Grains continue to trend lower with a generally plentiful supply globally. At the time of writing, it is not clear whether the Black Sea grain corridor will continue, but the market thinks it will. Russia wants 60 days, while Ukraine wants 120 days. Russia want some sanctions to be removed so they can export more of their agricultural products as part of the deal.**

The UK has an abundance of old crop cereals which are now discount to new crop. Currently we feel the risk to prices firming significantly, is unlikely. The Ukraine situation seems to be built into markets. Russia has a huge surplus to export, and Australia has just produced a record crop. It is also expected that Ukraine's grain harvest will be down by 37%, so hopefully there will be no surprises.

Despite cereal prices falling, the rest of the ingredients remain static and look expensive against cereals.

It has been reported that Argentina has had the biggest crop failure ever but Brazil, is still predicting a record crop. Spot soya remains a premium over the summer as we wait for new crop supplies which is likely to be delayed.

This is keeping most protein costs inflated and we are unlikely to see large pressure on soya prices until mid-summer when supplies from South America will be available.

Fibres look expensive against cereals. Sugar beet remains in the region of £350/t and is unlikely to fall until new season crop in October. On the back of the reduced Argentinian soya crop soya hulls remain high and demand will be greater due to the sugar beet situation.

Cereal co products, such as wheat and maize gluten remain expensive. However, products such as wheat feed are more competitively priced. We are seeing European plants switching from wheat gluten to wheat feed due to the extra cost of drying wheat gluten.

In summary, we are unlikely to see a major fall in prices until mid-summer but at some point the majority of ingredients will come under pressure.

**For more information on any of these points, please call the office on 01409 254 300.**



# TOP TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL REARING SEASON

**With the cost of poults looking to increase significantly again this year, planning your feeding regime is vital not only to ensure the birds are fit and strong for the shooting season, but also to help keep overall rearing costs down.**

As part of the Masseys County Game Feed range, we have an extensive choice of game feeds including Breeder, Superfine, Starter and Coarse Crumbs, Grower Pellets, Release Pellets and Maintenance Pellets for pheasant, partridge and duck to suit every type of rearing and release system.

Our County Game Feeds use only high-quality raw materials including highly digestible proteins, cereals and cereal by-products, and are carefully formulated to meet the needs of breeding and growing game birds. The inclusion of products such as Avatec 150G and Bio-Mos helps to support the developing immune system; which in turn leads to the prevention of disease outbreaks, cuts the costs of treatments and reduces mortalities.

Heavy worm burdens can also be a contributing factor to disease outbreaks, so the use of in-feed wormers can help to alleviate this stressor and reduce pressure on the bird's gut-health. We recommend speaking with your vet regarding worm treatments as they can advise the best preventative treatment where necessary.

Good biosecurity is key to improving overall flock health by helping to keep out critical diseases such as Coccidiosis, Hexamita and more recently Avian Influenza. For game farms or shoots that rear their own birds, now is the time to ensure that you have thoroughly cleaned and disinfected all your game rearing equipment. This includes rearing sheds, transport crates, feeders, drinkers, vehicles and water pipes.

Don't forget water hygiene! Clean, fresh drinking water will stimulate growth and vigour in your birds as much as anything else.

Ensure water sanitisers are used regularly and lines are kept clean to prevent any bacteria build ups, especially on hot summer days when pipes are lying on the ground.

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



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# GETTING CALVES OFF TO A FLYING START

**If you want to get your calves off to the best start you need to focus on colostrum feeding and then following a feed curve to optimise early growth.**

It is crucial to ensure calves achieve high DLWG in the early life, as every additional 100g DLWG in the first two months of life is equal to an extra 225kg of milk yield in the first lactation.

When a calf is born it has very little immunity, so colostrum needs to be delivered quickly to provide the calf with the suitable antibodies to provide passive immunity in early life. Calves need to receive the equivalent of 10% of their bodyweight in good quality colostrum within six hours of birth.

Colostrum should be tested using a Brix refractometer to ensure it is good quality. Only use colostrum with a Brix Score of 22 or higher. Colostrum with a lower score than this should be discarded as it will not provide the new-born with enough antibodies.

When feeding colostrum, make sure to follow the 5 Qs:

**Quantity**  
10% of bodyweight

**Quickly**  
Within the first 6 hours

**Quietly**  
Stress free for the calf

**Quality**  
Brix Score above 22

**sQueaky Clean**  
Clean colostrum and clean equipment for feeding.

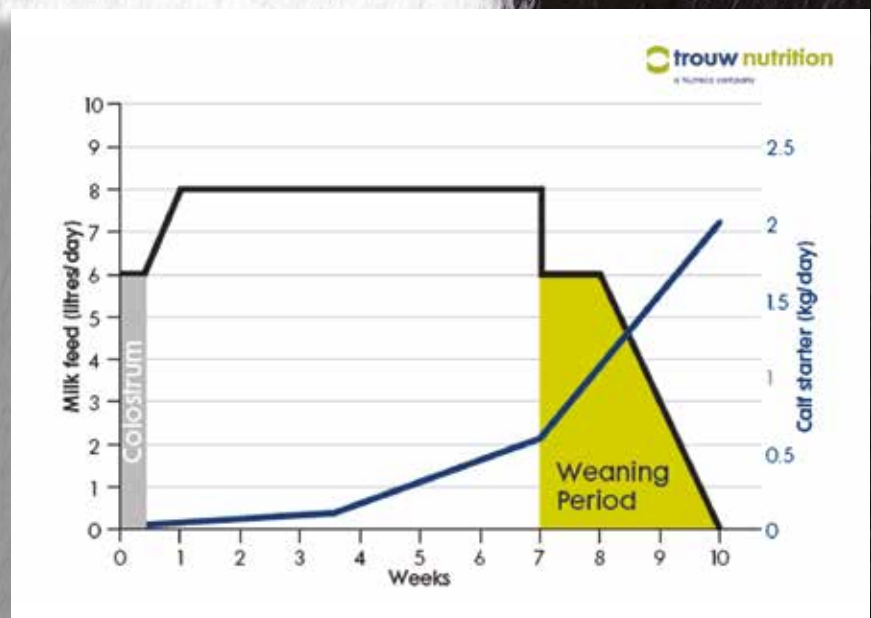
Once the calf has had its colostrum, it is then time to implement a feeding curve for the next stages leading up to weaning (see graph). A well-designed feed curve will maximise growth rates but also allow a good intake of compound feed to promote growth rates and rumen development. Calves should be up to full feed levels of 8 litres a day within the first week.

A managed decline in milk fed will then encourage calves to increase calf starter intakes and allow a smooth transition in the weaning stage.

**Talk to your Feed Specialist about our milk replacers and calf starter feeds.**



**Alex Cornish**  
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# GREENWELL LAMBING LIVE 2023

**For many years we have opened our farm and more specifically our lambing barn to the public during lambing.**

It is a great opportunity to get the general public, schools, special-needs children and a few residential homes onto a working farm at a magical time of year. We open up for just over a week. Evening sessions are between 5.30 and 7.30 and on Saturday from 1pm until 4pm for the general public.

At Greenwell we feel it is so important to engage with our community on farm. For to long we have been busy being the best farmers we can be in very challenging times, but we have maybe neglected the most important person in our supply chain, our customer! It is so rewarding to get them in the barn up close and personal with us and our Whiteface Dartmoor ewes.

We get such a reward from sharing our story. It certainly helps to talk about what we do; the conversations are varied and surprising but it is a great opportunity to sell our industry. We feel getting people in the barn and helping them understand how our industry works is a great help when we are trying to build a sustainable future for our business and selling beef and lamb locally through Dartmoor Farmers Association.

It isn't easy to run an event like this. A week is long enough and we deliberately run it at the start of our lambing season before we get too tired and grumpy! We will welcome over 1000 people into our barn this year again and we would like to thank Harpers Feeds who are again kind enough to support the event.

Mat and Gemma Cole and the team at Greenwell



# INOCULANTS CAN MAXIMISE PROTEIN RETENTION IN SILAGE

**Treating grass with an inoculant will help retain valuable nutrients in the crop when fed as silage and this is especially true for protein.**

Naturally occurring microbes can break down protein and produce foul-smelling silage acids, leading to nutrient loss and reduced silage palatability. These microbes can be inhibited quickly when a proven, specific forage inoculant is used to rapidly drop the pH below the level where these microbes can be active.



The Magniva Platinum forage inoculants which are formulated specifically for grass have been shown to retain up to 4% more protein in grass silage, increasing the supply of rumen-friendly protein and reducing the need for bought in protein.

This improves the utilisation of home-grown feeds and will also help keep feeding costs under control, typically saving 4-5p/cow/day.

There are other important points to consider along with the inoculant if you want to maximise the amount of protein retained in grass silage:

1. Do not wilt grass for more than 24 hours. Studies have shown that up to 20% of the initial protein will be broken down when grass is wilted for in excess of 24 hours.
2. Only mow the amount of grass that can be picked up before rain, because wet grass has a higher rate of protein breakdown than dry grass.
3. Spread slurry far enough in advance (minimum 4 weeks) so no residue is left on the leaf surface, because slurry is rich in microbes that break down protein.

**For more information about Magniva inoculants, speak to your Feed Specialist.**



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**2nd & 3rd May**

Dorset and Pull Dorset Sale  
Exeter Livestock Market, EX2 8FD

**9th May**

NSA Southwest  
Yarcombe, EX14 9LW

**18th- 20th May**

Devon County Show  
Westpoint, Exeter, EX5 1DJ