

feedtalk

Issue 52 • October 2023



FEEDING FOR MILK QUALITY THIS WINTER



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Often, I find myself repeating my own Words!! No two years are the same! Where has that year gone! To think we are now in October and not only have we already experienced the hottest day of the year in September but also the hottest week.

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. Our first cut averages from 2023 support this, we have sampled 201 in total, and the averaged results are below:

Description	2023 Average	
Dry Matter	33	➔
Crude Protein %	12.96	⬇
ME MJKG	11.07	⬇
NDF (netural detergent fibre)	49	⬆
Fibre Index	51.4	⬆
Rapid Fermentable Carbohydrate	174	⬇
Total Fermentable Carbohydrate	398	⬇

So what does this tell us? As I previously indicated milk quality, particularly fat % shouldn't be a problem.

These silage are high in fibre which will deliver Butyrate, sadly it doesn't stop there, they are low in carbohydrates which is where we gain our glucose from. Couple this with a low ME (energy) and we are dealing with very sluggish silage that needs some 'fizzy starch' to get cows fired up. Look to the Glycogenic Range of feeds or for the non soya feeders Planet High Starch and Planet Mega Milk - to give you a much improved glyucose boost.

Protein levels are also under challenge with the first cuts at just shy of 13%. This in the early cuts indicates that the grass was cold and hadn't allowed the uptake of nitrogen. We then got hit with the wet weather, by the time we got to cutting, many in late May, all the nitrogen had been used up. Early indication is that the latter cuts this year will readdress this low protein with many third and fourth cuts testing a lot higher already. Please be careful opening too many faces of silage, temptation would be to feed some of both to try and balance the shortfalls. On paper this sounds fine, but due to the dry matter of a number of these silages keeping the face cool maybe a problem. Balancing one silage at a time will be more effective than spoiling two or more faces.

Many farms are now in the midst of calving or have just finished their Autumn block. Grass growth has been exceptional of late with massive cuts. Please don't illude yourselves that grass is sufficient for fresh cows on its own. While there looks to be ample grazing, the reality is that with low dry matter the cows would need to be eating in the region of 90kgs fresh weight to simply stand still. Sufficient intakes can't be achieved without buffering and the cows will be mobilising fat from their bodies to make up the shortfall.

This is a real negative for fertility and milk production so must be avoided at all costs. Winter rationing is going to be a challenge to try and get these forages to perform. Make sure you are frequently analysing your clamps, make single changes and evaluate over a week. Whilst I'm not a fan of multiple feed changes these silages will require assistance.

Fats are proving valuable particularly with lower ME forages. Increasing the energy density in the base ration is key to getting cows to perform. I aim for 11.6ME/kgDM in the base to allow the total fed to hit the 12ME/kgDM mark when you add compound feed. This isn't going to be easy from a very low base hence the need for fat.

Please speak to your Harpers Feed Specialist to balance the diet and make sure it's cost effective to add these supplements. I'm very mindful that milk price isn't brilliant, but we still need a cow back in calf for next year, so my advice is feed well until we have a safely pregnant cow, then opt to challenge feed.

Maize samples brought to our two testing days have been excellent, in many cases high starch and high ME which are going to complement these lower quality grass silages. Getting the balance right is key but if stocks will allow don't be scared of feeding 60% maize or higher diets, particularly on constituent contracts. These will obviously require a higher input of protein, but the desired energy is vital.

For any further help and advice please contact me or any member of the Harpers team.

Farming thoughts

What a difficult harvest our cereal growers have had.

Mother Nature always balances the books, and with the wet summer this has really helped bulk up forage stocks and now there is plenty of grass for autumn lambs and cattle to graze, which will certainly shorten the winter period. Ground condition permitting, maize forage will be harvested as I write. Yields again are looking promising and hopefully, quality will match.

Milking cows are now being housed and this year's first cuts are not performing as well as hoped. These forages need firing up. Many herds are 2-3 litres down on last year. I would urge you to monitor milk ureas, body condition scores and muck consistency.

Where is the light at the end of the tunnel? I don't believe the current AHDB weekly milk volumes. They say we are running 0.8% above last year, when milk yields since the hot spell in September have plummeted. One of our local cheese makers can't even hit core volumes. Once these cheese makers have sold their stock made with the higher milk prices, then we will see milk prices firm. I feel milk prices will firm again in Spring next year.

Over the next month we will be trialling evening/night deliveries, so that one lorry has two drivers per day. We won't be offended if you say no to an evening delivery, but we are just looking at efficiencies in our business.

Congratulations to Dan and his team at Massey Harpers for being finalists at the Over the Counter Independent Store of the Year. Our very own Matt Dymond has been nominated for Nutritional SQP of the Year award. The awards are being held on Friday 10th November.



Glen Johns
Sales Director
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GRAIN AND STRAIGHTS

Harvest is finally done, with much relief to many. Yields and quality of this year's UK harvest can only be described as variable.

It is projected that the UK will produce 14.75 million tonnes of wheat this year, down from the 15.5 million tonnes last year. Barley production is anticipated to be down slightly at 7 million tonnes.

The gap between both has narrowed from £15/t to just £8/t now. Growers are currently reluctant sellers. With Europe also having a poor harvest, milling wheat will be in short supply so it is likely millers will have to reduce their specifications but still will need more wheat to fulfil their flour requirements.

Globally, demand is outstripping production leading to lower ending stocks. Russia seems to have put a bottom in the market and the minimum price they are selling for is \$270. Currently the EU have cheaper wheat. Exports out of Odesa, Ukraine are still taking place despite the end of the grain corridor. Australia is having a heatwave and it is anticipated their crop will be down 13 million tonnes on last year to 26 million tonnes. Most of these factors indicate cereal prices firming.

The sugar beet harvest is in full swing with a good crop expected. With a shortage of sugar, planting is up around 17% on last year, with growers being paid £40/t compared to £25/t last year. Home produced sugar beet remains the most competitive with very few imports which are more expensive.

Globally soya supply seems to be increasing with ending stocks the highest they have been for several years, despite the downgrading of the US soya harvest due to lower yields and overall production reduced to under 113 million tonnes. Long term the expectation is we should see lower prices especially as a big South American crop is expected next spring.

Rape prices have recently come under pressure with an easing of demand. However, long term they are likely to firm especially as Canada is expected to produce the smallest rape crop in 9 years.

Currency continues to affect prices as we see the £:\$ going from 1.31 to 1.22. This alone will put around £30 per tonne on soya prices.

To discuss any of these issues, please call the office on 01409 254 300.



Andrew Davies
Operations Director
01409 254 300

MAKING FEED MANAGEMENT EASY

Knowing exactly how much feed is left in your bin has always been a challenge, but that is about to change.

Collinson's FeedAlert silo monitoring system provides a low-cost, innovative way to reliably monitor silo feed levels, making feed management much easier for everyone.

The strain gauge technology is suitable for all makes of bin, attaching to both new and existing feed bins. The system takes a weight reading daily, producing data that can be viewed via the FeedAlert App by both the farmer and the feed company. The data generated will be used to predict feed deliveries helping to prevent you running out.

The strain gauge system bolts to one leg of the bin. It's a self-install which can be done in less than 30 minutes. Aside from the drill, everything needed comes in the installation kit. Once fitted, all that is left to do is tare the device when the bin is empty and then re-calibrate to a new weight following delivery. The FeedAlert monitoring system is accurate to within 95% of a full load.

We have FeedAlert systems in stock and our team is on hand to deliver and install this equipment to your feed bin.

If you'd like to learn more about this feed monitoring system, please contact your Feed Specialist or the office on 01409 254 300.



Myles Jones
Ruminant and Game
Feed Specialist
07817 161 681



FEEDS FOR DIFFERENT BEEF BREEDS

This winter looks like being another good opportunity to maximise returns from your beef enterprise by finishing the cattle you have grazed this summer.

Finished beef prices are firming at both live and deadweight centres. Supply seems tucked under demand and £5 /kilo deadweight is not far away.

It is clear as we prepare rations for different groups of cattle that to maximise performance, we need to know more about the breeds involved and the genetic potential of those breeds and crosses. We are all getting used to having forage analysed more frequently but we are not as good at understanding the finishing ability of a wide range of breeds and crosses.



This variety not only affects growth rates but also feed intake. This winter I plan to try to group different breeds and crosses so that we can ration more efficiently. As the basis for this, I am going to segregate the breeds into three different groups.

Before you all ring me to complain about my assessment of your breed, let me explain that some breeds eat more than others and some breeds will produce good results from either less total feed or less concentrates. It is just as important that we recognise a breed that does well from forage, albeit at a slightly lower growth rate, is as efficient as a breed that will grow well if fed a high-powered diet.

HIGH DENSITY RATION REQUIRED

Most purebred continental breeds and Hereford/Angus crosses from cows put to continental bulls with high EBV's, all steers, heifers and bulls. Most continental cross steers and bulls from the Holstein/Friesian dairy herd.

MEDIUM DENSITY RATION REQUIRED

Larger framed purebred beef breeds including South Devons, Beef Shorthorns, some Angus, some Herefords. All steers and bulls from these breeds. Heifers from continental x Holstein/Friesian dairy cows. Steers and bulls from crossbred dairy cows by any bull.

LOW DENSITY RATION REQUIRED

All upland and some lowland native breeds including Red Devons, traditional Angus and Herefords, Galloways, Lincolns, Sussex, etc. Heifers from crossbred dairy cows including a percentage of Jersey by any bull.

I am sure there will be other breeds and crosses to fit into this table as the season progresses.

The table below contains diet requirements for the different groups showing how diets will be tailored.

Speak to your Feed Specialist to agree your breed specifications, adding any EBV data you may have. We will then formulate the most efficient ration you can have to optimise cost/kg liveweight gain.



Bill Harper
Director
07831 099 182



Jake Chisholm
Feed Specialist
07823 344 222

	High density	Medium density	Low density
Energy content (MJ/kgDM)	At least 12	11.5	11
Total starch and sugars (%DM)	30	27	25
NDF (%DM)	40	43	45

FINISHING LAMBS THIS AUTUMN

Lamb prices have been holding steady with the deadweight price staying well above the £5/kg. The trade is suggesting that last year's lower scanning results are going to create a tight lamb trade later this year and into the early part of the new year.

The store lamb market has also been strong with the buyers looking to cover the tighter forward periods.

All this means it's vital to make the most of the lambs that are still on farm regardless of whether they are going to make the strong store trade or buoyant fat lamb market, both dead and live weight. In short, lambs are still a great investment. Feed them now for a better sale price, alongside the cheap and plentiful autumn grass.

There has been a large flush of 'spring like' grass. The weaned lambs have been grateful for the fresh bite, it is important to remember that this grass is wet, with a low dry matter. The results of grass from Trow Nutrition's weekly Grasswatch report showed the average dry matter is around 17%, with a protein level of 23%.

This grass is going to cause lambs to be loose in their muck due to the high levels of protein. These protein levels will also make the lambs grow in frame, but not necessarily in meat and fat, as the rumen will require a starch source to produce flesh.

With many ewes now returning to ram and being flushed for later tupping, it's important to allow plenty of grazing for the flock. And it's time to start moving on with the forward store and fat lambs.

Fed alongside this autumn grass, or adlib in a barn Harpers 15% Lamb Finisher Nuts are the perfect balance of starch, protein and fibre to allow lambs to grow on and gain the flesh required to meet slaughter weights and grades.

To discuss the best approach for your lambs, talk to your Feed Specialist.



TIME TO CONSIDER YEAST

Adding yeast to diets could have some big advantages this winter. Including the rumen-specific live yeast, Levucell SC, in your feed can increase feed efficiency while also delivering environmental benefits.

The live yeast works by optimising rumen function and improving fibre digestion. This boosts feed efficiency by 3-6%, meaning your cows get more out of the feed available. On average that means an extra 1.1kg of milk per cow per day whilst maintaining milk solids (fats and protein) with a typical return on investment of 4:1.

By supplementing Levucell SC in lactation you can potentially reduce your carbon footprint of milk production by up to 6% through its impact on feed efficiency.

Fed to dry cows, it also reduces body weight loss and promotes early lactation feed intake. This, combined with the improved feed efficiency during lactation, has the potential to improve milk yields by up to 8% in total, making a significant contribution to sustainable milk production.

In a season where high disease levels in crops may result in higher mycotoxin levels, it may be also worth considering Levucell SC Toxisorb, which will help reduce the negative consequences of mycotoxins.

For more information, speak to your Feed Specialist.



YARN IN A BARN

We are joint hosting two informal meetings with the Farm Community Network in October

THURSDAY 12TH OCTOBER

St Buryan Farm Shop
TR19 6EL

FRIDAY 20TH OCTOBER

Griggs Farm Shop and Restaurant
St Austell
PL26 7JH

Both meetings run from 12:00 – 14:30 and a pasty lunch will be provided.

The meetings provide a chance to take a break from the farm and join us for some interesting speakers and plenty of discussion.

Edward Richardson from Farm Cornwall will talk about Navigating the agricultural transition, while a speaker from Harpers Feeds will provide an update on fertiliser and feed forward prices.

We hope to see as many of you there as possible.

To book your place call the office on 01409 254 300

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Event	Date	Location
Bath & West Dairy Event	Wednesday 4th October	The Bath & West Showground, Shepton Mallet Showground, BA4 6QN
Cornwall Pedigree Beef Calf Show	Saturday 21st October	The Royal Cornwall Showground, Wadebridge, PL27 7JE
Liskeard Primestock Show	Saturday 28th October	The Old Cattle Market, Liskeard, PL14 4AA
Agrifest	Wednesday 8th November	Westpoint, Exeter, EX5 1DJ



Harpers Feeds

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