



## NO TWO YEARS THE SAME

**Do you ever feel like whatever you do, it doesn't quite get you to where you want to be? This winter has been a good example. While forage was abundant it not only hasn't analysed particularly well but it hasn't fed well either. Milk quality has been exceptional but in most cases, performance has been a couple of litres light on previous years.**

The question on everyone's mind is what to do for 2022? Cutting date and timely application of fertiliser are crucial. Fertiliser costs have escalated, with many farmers still talking of either not applying any or relying on lots of slurry to plug the fertiliser hole. This is grassland suicide. I urge everyone to treat this year the same as previous years. Make the very best of your first cut in terms of quality and quantity. Apply sensible levels of fertiliser for second cut.

Once second cut is in the clamp, assess your remaining requirement for forage and then make the plan for the third cut. Multicut systems in the Southwest have very variable results so think carefully about going down this route.

If you can grow maize, consider growing more, making sure to choose an early-maturing variety to help ensure a successful harvest. For those with the ability to grow some spring cereals, it will pay to get it in! If it looks like you will be short of forage, take it as a whole crop. Use the wholecrop to feed dry cows and youngstock, saving the higher ME silages for the milking herd.

Otherwise harvest as traditional grain and straw. Remember, forage is still the cheapest feed for cows.

To maximise the use of slurry you need to know how much it is worth, so we strongly recommend getting it tested so you can tailor your fertiliser plans. We have seen great success improving the value of slurry with SlurriN PRO. By adding specific bacteria to the slurry, it is shown to increase the retention of nutrients, and by making the slurry more free-flowing, it reduces the stirring required, saving diesel, time and money.

### **ANALYSE GRASS REGULARLY**

Feed for this spring is going to be a premium so selecting the right diet and protein content is crucial. This can only be done if you know the quality of forages being fed which means regular analysis of the forages and grazed grass in the diet. Our NIR machine has been updated to read fresh grass. Providing the samples are with us by 11am, results should be available the same day.

The Spring range has slightly changed from last Spring, with a new and improved Creamfield range including Novatan which helps cows harness more of the protein from the grass which would normally be wasted in the form of urea, costing her energy. Novatan also allows us to use lower protein cakes and pass on the financial savings to you. We are the only feed business in the South West using Novatan in dairy compounds.

The Creamfield range is available as 13, 15 or 17% protein, with a high sugar beet inclusion. Don't be afraid to drop the protein percentage in your dairy cake as long as you have taken my advice on fertiliser and testing grass.

Cows only have a requirement for 16-17% protein in the total diet. With most grazing swards typically 16-28%, why would you add an 18% protein cake on top?

I admit last season milk urea's were the lowest we have ever seen, indicating that there was lower nitrogen available in the grass. But we quickly realised this was due to the time of fertiliser application and the soil temperature. Fertiliser was applied and lay dormant. Day temperatures were good with some sun so the grass plant built sugars up. However, nights were cold which prevented the uptake of the nitrogen, resulting in the low ureas and therefore low proteins in the silages.

So, please use the team to measure, monitor and make informed decisions. Use the range of diets on offer to maximise performance and minimise nutrient wastage. Get cows safely pregnant before cutting feed rates as we still want them to perform at their best next year.

**We are committed to helping you and your business tackle these obstacles so please pick up the phone.**



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To reduce our business footprint, as of 1st April 2022 we will no longer be posting our Feedtalk newsletters. **Feedtalk newsletters will be available digitally.**

Please call the office on 01409 254 300 or sign up on our website [www.harpersfeeds.co.uk](http://www.harpersfeeds.co.uk).  
If you would still like a hard copy, please speak to your Feed Specialist.

# Farming thoughts

## TIME FOR SOME COMMON SENSE

**Someone needs to ask those politicians in Whitehall “How are we going to feed our nation?”**

RPA's focus seems to be on moving farmers from BPS and CS to ELMs and SFI. The focus has turned to managing hedgerows, planting trees, re-wilding and paying for someone to go around and tell you how to do it. Then we have the Environmental Agency (EA) and its rules for water policy. If we want good UK produced food on our tables, the EA and RPA need to be talking and soon.

No-one wants to be polluting water courses, but the regulations and rules are yet to be finalised and a clear and financially viable direction needs to be given to farmers. To implement the changes, it will cost the average farmer £250K to store slurry and manures for four months.

Farmgate prices will have to keep rising in all sectors for this investment to take place and future SFP funds need to be directed into grants.

I've always said, “It's not the cow's fault” when commodity prices rise. Likewise, “It's not the plants fault” that fertiliser prices are at record highs. Start with the basics, keep your soil sampling up to date. There is no point applying fertiliser if your soil pH is way out. Use our sales team to monitor costs. Costings are an excellent way of looking at feed efficiencies and milk/liveweight gain from forage.

Whatever happens in the next six months, you can't produce liveweight gain and milk without quality forages. So, let's look forward to a cracking Spring.

## EVENING DELIVERIES

To improve the efficiency and service of our haulage fleet we are aiming to do some evening deliveries. Customers will be notified that day and deliveries will not take place past 11pm.



**Glen Johns**  
Sales Director  
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## GRAINS AND STRAIGHTS UPDATE

**A New Year can often change market direction and we have seen this in the last few years. This year sentiment remains the same with tight stocks and the whole market being forced by logistical issues.**

The cereal market has eased slightly, but this has made sellers close the barn doors. Merchants want bigger premiums, so cereals, in particular barley, are difficult to buy. With two ethanol plants expected to open again, wheat is being diverted to fill these plants.

Malting barley remains in high demand which will reduce feed barley availability.

After the lowest opening stocks this century and the down grade of the UK wheat crop, it is anticipated that stocks will remain tight for the rest of the season.

Soya prices remain firm as South American crops are down-graded due to the La Nina weather conditions. Old crop rape prices remain firm, but there is some good news as the global supply of new crop is set to increase. EU rape plantings are set to increase significantly.

With the opening of the second ethanol plant in the UK, the supply of distillers is set to increase considerably. This will reduce the demand for rape and therefore put pressure on prices.

Fibre products look expensive for the summer. Home produced sugar beet is currently unavailable and shippers have limited availability. Soya hulls have looked attractive, but with the issues in South America prices are starting to firm.

**To help with our logistics, if requirements can be booked as early as possible, this would be a huge help. If you would like to discuss any of these matters, please do not hesitate to contact us.**



**Andrew Davies**  
Operations Director  
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## MAKE SURE YOU GET THE MOST FROM MAIZE

**Maize can be a consistent high-quality forage and with increasing fertiliser costs, it will be an even more cost-effective contributor to your total forage stocks this year. The key to successful maize is selecting the right variety for your farm.**

Start by choosing a variety that will mature in time to be harvested in good conditions. This will also make it easier to establish a successor crop. Then make sure the variety has a high ME content, combining high starch and cell wall digestibility so cows can make the most of the feed.

One variety that delivers on many farms is Pinnacle. It is the top early maturing variety for starch content, which combined with high cell wall digestibility results in a high energy crop. With its high dry matter yields the result is outstanding energy yields per hectare, providing a cost-effective foundation to your diets next winter.



**Jake Chisholm**  
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# SUSTAINABLE WEST COUNTRY BEEF

**We all know the pressure is on farming to reduce emissions so I want to look at ways to produce beef more efficiently and profitably, which in turn will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**

Our binary choice for dairy cross calves is between using a continental or native sire.



In general terms, continental calves have longer gestation periods, more calving difficulties and can be hard to finish at an acceptable age. Natives can be easier calving and finishing, but slower growing and prone to becoming over fat.

Luckily, there is a lot of work going on, looking at developing new beef hybrids which could help overcome some of these issues and produce grass-based beef that meets market requirements cost effectively.

Some hybrids look particularly promising and seem to tick many of the boxes having a good score for calving ease and a short gestation length, both of which are important to the dairy producer.

At the same time they have better Feed Conversion Efficiency, meaning every kilo of feed dry matter will produce more liveweight gain.

This figure is the key to profitable production and a lower slaughter age, and is coupled with the right balance of shape and finishing

abilities to meet processor requirements. All this adds up to efficient grass-based production to produce

18-24 month old, finished, tender beef with significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

We have started putting some semen on dairy farms so will have calves on the ground in the autumn and will be able to see for ourselves how they perform.

We continue to discuss with processors the need to have a South West Sustainable Beef product available on supermarket shelves as we know we are all demand driven. If we are to be able to sell our products well, it has to have the right credentials and appeal to the consumer.

**If you would like more details, please let me know.**



**Bill Harper**  
Director  
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## SPRING CALVING IS AROUND THE CORNER, ARE YOU READY?

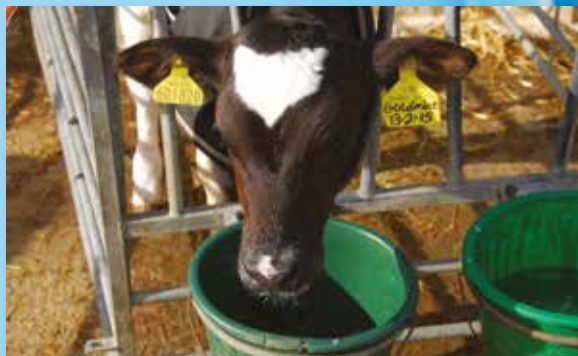
**It is that time of year again to get ready for spring calf rearing and being prepared can save you time and money and ensure a successful calving season.**

Whether you decide to feed milk powder or whole milk, there are important husbandry and hygiene details to consider to help ensure healthy, high-performing calves.

- Are your calving sheds cleaned out, washed down and sanitized?
- Do you have all your calf essentials to hand? From pens to buckets and from weighing systems to castration rings
- Are your calving products/ items in good working condition? If not, is it time for some new ones?
- Are your calf jackets in a clean and working order or do you need to replace some?
- Is all your feeding equipment clean and sanitized ready to go?

All these small details can help with your calves performance.

The calves environment is what calf rearers have the most control over, especially hygiene. Hygiene plays a huge role in preventing disease, reducing challenges for the calf and helping optimise liveweight gain and good gut health. So make sure the environment and equipment are kept as clean as possible.



### OUR CALF RANGE

Our range of calf feeds is fixed formulated and available in all sizes from small bags to bulk. For optimal growth and rumen development, introduce a high quality, palatable concentrate from an early age and remember to give your calves access to fresh water from day one.

We only sell British made milk powders, available in handy 20kg bags. Available in a range of whey and skimmed based powders formulated for fast growth rates and healthy calves. All powders are suited for bucket rearing systems and machine feeding to suit your farm system.

**For more information, speak to your Feed Specialist and call Harpers Farm Supplies for all your calving equipment needs.**



**Louise Hosegood**  
Feed Specialist  
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# MAKE YOUR OWN FERTILISER

**With fertiliser prices set to remain high for the foreseeable future, now is the time to consider Bokashi which is more environmentally friendly and a lower cost plant feed than fertilisers.**

Bokashi is a refined process for decomposing manures using microorganisms to ensure more carbon and energy is captured and returned to the soil compared to other methods of decomposition. The process has five important benefits:

- Reduces harmful emissions.
- Ready to use in 8 weeks.
- Retains nutrients.
- Pre-digested food for the soil.
- Increased soil organic matter.

Traditional composting uses a process called aerobic decomposition which produces heat and carbon dioxide, generating a significant carbon footprint and reducing the nutritional value to the soil.

Bokashi uses anaerobic decomposition, which produces no carbon dioxide or heat, meaning no carbon footprint is created. It results in more nutrients being kept during the fermentation process for the soil and plants to use.

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



# FEEDING EWES FOR A SUCCESSFUL LAMBING

**With lambing well under way on many farms, it is time to focus on feeding ewes and lambs to take advantage of the current lamb market.**

Ensuring your ewes are getting the correct balance of energy, protein and minerals is key to a successful lambing. Regardless of whether your flock is carrying singles, twins or triplets, feeding should be designed around the quality of forage you are offering. Expect to feed more compound feed if forage energy content is 10MJ/kg/DM than if it is 11MJ/kg/DM.



Feeding a high-quality concentrate such as our 19% Intensive Ewe Nuts allows ewes to retain the correct body condition whilst preparing for good milk yields.

It is essential that forage being fed pre-lambing is analysed to understand its dry matter, energy and protein content.

This will allow any energy or protein deficiencies to be identified, balancing forage with a suitable compound feed

at the correct levels. Speak to your Feed Specialist about getting your forages analysed and a feed plan developed with the results using our Ewe Ready Reckoner.

We can add Lifeline to some of our ewe diets which helps reduce the stress of lambing. It also increases colostrum quality giving lambs an increased immunity from birth. Lifeline also improves lamb vigour so they get up and start sucking sooner.

Once lambs are on the ground and feeding from their mothers, it is time to think about how fast you want them to finish. Our Lamb Start 2 Finish Pellets are a favourite for quick and high-level intakes. An 18% protein complete compound feed, it delivers the nutrients needed at each stage of production. All our stocked creep feeds also contain ammonium chloride as this is the most effective way to prevent urinary calculi.

Offering creep feed to your lambs from 2-3 weeks old encourages better early intakes of dry feed and promotes faster growth. It takes time for lambs to eat hard feeds in any large quantities, so the earlier you introduce the feeds the better. Remember, the younger the lambs the better the conversion rate will be. And offer fresh clean water throughout all stages of lamb growth.

**For more information on our sheep feed diets, please speak to your Feed Specialist.**



**Myles Jones**  
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Harpers Farm Supplies have a wide variety of products eligible under the DEFRA Farming Investment Fund. A full list of eligible products can be found on their website [www.farmersdirect.co.uk](http://www.farmersdirect.co.uk). For more information, please call the store on 01409 259 600.



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