

FEEDING YOUR PREGNANT EWES

Given the year we have just seen weatherwise in the southwest it is fair to say it's not been the easiest for our sheep flocks. Soaring temperatures and limited rain fall hampered grass growth for much of the summer. Subsequently the performance of all grazing animals has suffered.

Sheep producers across the southwest now must plan very carefully to make sure they do all they can to maximise lambs born alive, lamb vitality and growth rates while making the very best of the forages, grass, and feed already in store. With this in mind I suggest we look at the following:

Ewe condition

Is the ewe going to be capable of the performance we would normally expect? At lambing, ewes need to be at Condition Score 3.0 and it can take 6-8 weeks to lift a condition score. Condition scoring ewes now will allow the flock to be broken down into manageable groups, with nutrition targeted to increase individual condition and performance.

Harpers Intensive Ewe Rolls or Nuts provide high levels of energy and quality protein, including a good level of by-pass protein. Starting at 0.25kg/day 6-8 weeks pre-lambing will allow enough time for the rumen to adapt to a new feed before it reduces in size as the lamb grows. The concentrate feed should be gradually increased, ending up near 0.8-1.0kg / ewe/day at lambing and through lactation.



Forage analysis

The weather has made grass growth tight, so many farmers have less forage than normal, and in many situations the quality is not what we might normally expect. Testing forages is a must to understand the quality of the forage you are feeding and allow it to be supplemented precisely. If we can't or don't measure it, then how can we manage it?

Minerals and vitamins

The levels of grazing swards were tight in the summer and autumn, which will have had an effect on available minerals. An in-lamb ewe will have to be providing for herself and the lamb, meaning levels of iodine, cobalt and selenium will be in high demand.

Harpers Farm Supplies have a range of products to help top up any ewes that may be under conditioned or under stress from multiple lambs. There is now a full Harpers range of mineral buckets to feed in the field or in the shed. This will allow ewes access to additional energy on top of their daily feeding, and also extra minerals to support the unborn lambs and the ewe herself.

If you are concerned about mineral levels in the diet, there is also a full range of mineral drenches available for both lowland and upland flocks. The unborn lamb and ewe will have a high requirement for the major minerals, such as sodium, chlorine, calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, sulphur, potassium, and trace minerals, including cobalt, copper, iodine, iron, manganese, molybdenum, zinc, and selenium. All of these can be found in the available ranges of drenches. However, if you are unsure, please feel free to give your Feed Specialist or Harpers Farm Supplies representative a call to discuss your needs.

Worm and fluke burdens

With the late flush of 'spring-like' grass in the autumn, ewes have seen a rise in worm and fluke burdens. These must be treated quickly and correctly so as not to hamper the ewe, and lamb performance. Assess worm burdens by carrying out dung sampling (FEC counts) and discuss a worming programme for the lambs and ewes going forward with our team of RAMA trained staff at Harpers Farm Supplies.

The overall conclusion from the above points comes back to accuracy. Feed costs are likely to remain high so farmers must be looking to target the ewes with the highest requirements and demand. Scanning and forage analysis will allow us to feed to these demands.

The Harpers range of sheep feeds can also be used to target feed flocks. With the range we can meet the requirements of a hill flock with a lower scanning percentage, through to the very high scanning levels seen on many lowland intensive flocks. Please ask your Feed Specialist to help you select the right feed for your flock, taking account of your forage stocks and quality and your target performance.



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Feed Specialist
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Farming thoughts

We always said, when it starts raining it won't stop, but its best to have it now.

As of 1st November, we are using accredited sustainable soya and palm products to cover our Saputo producers feed ingredients. Going forward, we will be helping our Arla producers hit the 'Big 5'. If your processor has specific requirements, please speak to your Feed Specialist.

With the COVID pandemic on the back burner, the supermarkets, not the consumer are now in full swing, putting pressure on farmers to reduce their carbon emissions and work towards net zero.

Here at Harpers, we have also kept a range of feeds on the back burner, which we can offer as a solution to our customers. The Harpers Planet range has three years of accompanying data so we are confident we can get milk yields, milk quality, beef and lamb growth rates and maintain health stocks without the use of soya and palm. Keep an eye on the farming press, social media, newsletters, and farmer meetings going forward to hear our message.

We have five sheep meetings over the next 10 weeks, covering flock health, alternative grass seed mixtures, feeding the ewe this winter and why sheep feed is so expensive this year. Please book yourselves into one of these evenings by calling 01409 254 300.

Raw material pricing is looking much better for quarter two next year. Cereals and proteins look better value, with the current lower demand in the monogastric sector and good predicted soya yields coming out of Brazil and Argentina. If Putin behaves himself, feed prices should be dropping in the Spring.

Thank you to everyone who supported our 30th birthday charity evening. £15K was raised for the two cancer charities!

On behalf of everyone at Harpers Feeds and Harpers Farm Supplies, I wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and hopefully another prosperous New Year!



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GRAIN AND STRAIGHTS

The main news this month is the extension to the Ukraine grain corridor.

The current agreement was until 19th November, but this has now been extended to 19th March 2023. The expectation was the agreement would continue hence markets have been reacting to this. A longer-term agreement will depend upon financial restrictions being lifted from Russia so is not guaranteed.

Ukraine have stated their exports have reached 15.1 million tonnes so far this season, with 5.7 million tonnes of wheat, 1.2 million tonnes of barley and 8.1 million tonnes of maize, down 31% on last year. Currently cereal prices remain under pressure, trading around £250-260/T ex-farm for wheat with barley a £15/T discount. In the short term, as with most good news in the market, it is difficult to see how prices will fall much lower but long term, six months prices should come under more pressure. What the new agreement will do is limit the upside of the market.

The weaker dollar has helped with buying dollar-based commodities, particularly soya products. Soya just remains a premium nearby, particularly in South West ports with a lack of shipments arriving. US soya production has been increased and South America is set to produce big crops with Brazil 152 million tonnes, up from the 126 million tonnes last year.

Again, the good news is in the market, but at some point we are likely to see issues during the growing season that could reduce the crop size as happens most years. The critical growing season is from now until February and currently Brazil and Argentina do need rain.

Feed demand is another focus with Avian Influenza rife across northern Europe and likely to effect millions of poultry. Many layers units are not restocking until retailers increase the price of eggs to cover higher feed and energy costs. China's zero policy on COVID continues with cases continuing to rise, forcing many people into lockdown and putting question marks over the country's economic recovery and product demand. This could mean demand for imported feed ingredients could be subdued, hence creating more supply putting pressure on prices.

Our view is that short term products will trade at levels similar to where we are today, but long term we should see some pressure coming onto feed ingredients with reduced demand and the possibility of increased level of supply.

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

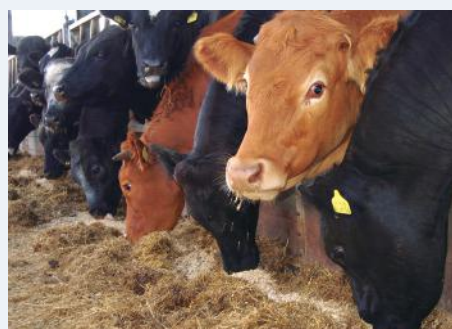


Andrew Davies
Operations Director
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BEEF RATIONING THIS WINTER

We are seeing some incredible liveweight gain figures coming through. With finishing cattle having been in for 4-8 weeks, now is the time to weigh cattle and check the ration you are feeding. We have now started turning the rationing system around, by using the intakes that the cattle are actually eating as the foundation for successful performance.

With forages much drier than usual it may seem that your cattle are eating less, but the dry matter intakes are actually higher due to the increased forage dry matter.



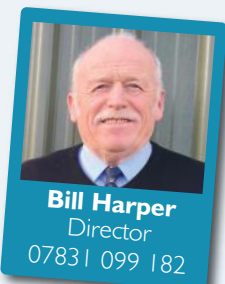
Please give your Feed Specialist the details of the forage your cattle are eating, the intake amounts and the performance you are looking for. If you have not had a forage analysis carried out, we can arrange this for you.

We will re-run the ration and advise any necessary changes in terms of energy, protein and fibre and the amounts of each ingredient to be fed to ensure you achieve your target performance as efficiently as possible.

We are keen to record farm details of feed conversion efficiency. If you are interested in knowing how much feed you are using to produce each kilogram of liveweight gain, please let your Feed Specialist know. The magic figure to aspire to is no higher than 5:1, so 5kg of total feed dry matter to produce 1kg of liveweight gain.

This is the sort of performance that will really drive financial performance and count in sustainability terms.

Please speak to your Feed Specialist for more information.



Bill Harper
Director
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PLANET DIETS CAN HELP REDUCE SOYA USE



Many milk processors are now considering removing soya products altogether from dairy diets, with some even looking at incentivising this switch.

The reaction has been farmers looking to make a change but questioning whether they can feed cows without the inclusion of soya. The good news is that thanks to advances in our understanding of protein nutrition, the tools are there to allow nutritionists to ration cows effectively and to reduce or remove soya from diets.

A well balanced diet will ensure the cows' requirements for metabolisable protein are met, providing the necessary quantities of the different fractions – MPN and MPE.

The MPN value tells us how much total protein is available to the animal, driven by the crude protein of the feed, whilst the MPE value of the ingredient is the one that drives milk production. We need to ensure we supply enough MPE but, at the same time, limit the MPN to avoid over-feeding nitrogen to cows and causing many other issues for the cow and the environment.

By understanding the cow's requirements for specific protein fractions it is possible to feed a balanced range of protein sources to meet these requirements while at the same time reducing the total protein content of the diet. We are increasingly seeing diets performing adequately closer to 16% CP whereas previously it was more common to see diets around 18% CP. And this can be achieved without hipro soya.

Recent research confirms that soya can be successfully replaced by a balance of protein sources including protected rapeseed. In a trial at Nottingham University in 2021, led by Professor Phil Garnsworthy, cows were either fed a diet containing hipro soya and standard

rapeseed or one containing rumen-protected rapeseed and wheat distillers.

The cows fed the diet excluding soya actually produced 1.7 litres per day more than the cows fed soya, in part due to increased dry matter intakes. But the key point is that removing soya did not cause performance to fall because the diet had been properly balanced to supply the metabolisable protein fractions required.

We now have a wide range of ingredients available to ensure cow's protein requirements are met without necessarily feeding as much, if any, hipro soya, and many have a greater reduced carbon footprint. Rapeseed and rumen-protected rapeseed can be used alongside feeds such as wheat distillers from the bioethanol production industry and beans. Beans are particularly interesting as in addition to a good protein content and balance, they also provide quality starch.

Milk producers should be confident about meeting the requirements of milk processors to reduce the use of soya products, because it is now possible to use dairy feeds that are zero soya.

In 2019, we took the lead and launched the Massey Harpers Planet range, the first UK dairy compounds and blends formulated to help meet the sustainability demands being placed on dairy farmers. We believe the Planet range meets the requirements of your herd and current processor schemes.

The range has been formulated to eliminate the use of ingredients linked to environment damage, in particular hipro soya, soya hulls, biscuit meals and palm kernel. Planet Dairy compounds and blends contain zero soya products and palm kernel. They have been replaced with proven ingredients with a lesser impact on the environment including protected rapeseed, wheat distillers, rapeseed, sugar beet pulp and wheatfeed. Non-palm containing fat supplements are also available.

Developments in the last few months highlight that the demands on dairy farmers from milk processors to reduce the carbon contribution

from milk production will intensify. Many schemes have already singled out soya and soya derivatives as a problem to be addressed, and by careful rationing including using the Planet range there is no reason why the use of soya in dairy diets can not be reduced.

To find out more about the Planet range, speak to your Feed Specialist.



Richard Waters
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Development Manager
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MAKE THE MOST OF SLURRY

With the current price of nitrogen fertiliser, it is vital you make the best use of the slurry on farm and maximise the nutrients you can use.

Slurri N Pro is a biological treatment for slurry made up of a blend of enzymes and bacteria that work together to improve the nutritive value of slurry as a fertiliser, helping retain more nitrogen.

It also improves the handling characteristics.

Slurri N Pro helps to reduce odours, particularly ammonia and improves fibre breakdown to make a more homogeneous, consistent slurry for ease of handling, reducing crusting which saves time and money as less mixing is required.

Speak to your Feed Specialist about the benefits of using Slurri N Pro.



Steve Jones
Feed Specialist
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LOOKING AHEAD TO THE NEXT GAME SEASON

The Game industry has seen yet another challenging year, with Avian Influenza (AI) greatly impacting the supply of game birds at all levels across the sector.

While shoots concentrate on getting through this season, plans must be considered about the supply of birds for next year. I would advise speaking to your current suppliers early to establish their situation for next season.

If the AI situation does not improve over the winter, many shoots will be considering whether to catch up hen birds and begin rearing their own birds to secure a supply. However, this takes time and careful planning so I would suggest speaking with your vets to discuss different management methods beforehand.

Game bird nutrition will also be important pre-laying to have the birds in the correct body condition, with adequate minerals and vitamins being supplied. Birds should be transitioned onto a suitable laying ration three weeks prior to lay to generate a good production of highly fertile eggs.

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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SUCCESS FOR WELLSHEAD RUBY RED DEVON CATTLE ON EXMOOR

Recently they held their Herd Competition. A huge congratulations to the Larkbarrow Herd of Wellshead Estate, Exford, Exmoor for being this year's Overall Winners of the Devon Cattle Breeding Society Herd Competition.

The Larkbarrow herd of 100 cattle are managed on a grass-based system for quality produce.

Devon Cattle are known for being a hardy and robust breed, well adapted to the climate and conditions of Devon and surrounding areas. It is a pleasure and a joy to work alongside a brilliant commercial herd producing both top quality breeding stock and butchers' premium beef, fed on Harpers 18% Cattle Combine Nuts.



CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS



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

The last order date before Christmas is Tuesday 13th December and the last order date before New Year is Tuesday 20th December.

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

Everyone at Harpers Feeds and Harpers Farm Supplies wishes all our customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Event	Date	Location
Wednesday 7th December	Harpers Farm Supplies Birthday Open Day	Harpers Farm Supplies, EX22 6FU 8am-8pm
Thursday 8th December	Sheep Meeting- To book call 01409 254 300	Trethorne Leisure, Launceston, PL15 8QE 6.30pm
Saturday 17th December	Okehampton v Launceston Rugby match	Okehampton Rugby Club, EX20 1JB - 14.30 Kick Off
Wednesday 11th January 2023	Sheep Meeting- To book call 01409 254 300	South Molton Rugby Club, EX36 3LH 6.30pm
Thursday 12th January 2023	Sheep Meeting- To book call 01409 254 300	Prince of Wales, Princetown, PL20 6QF 6.30pm
Saturday 14th January 2023	Bideford v Paignton Rugby match	Bideford RFC, EX39 2QS 14.30 Kick Off