



## FOUR STEPS TO DRY COW TRANSITION SUCCESS

**Where is time going?! I am turning my attentions to this year's Autumn block calving herds and it's only June! However, there are still several things to do and put into practice before we get cows calved. Here are my four focuses for a successful dry cow transition.**

### 1. BODY CONDITION, LOCOMOTION SCORING

Cows in general have been performing well with many farmers suggesting they are 2+ litres up on this time last year. Probably due to the change in weather but also, we have seen a kind spring with early and strong grass growth. Getting the cows scored by an independent person to enable an unbiased result is crucial. Understanding body condition is very important, within any herd you will always see a range in size, but as an average where is your herd? Do we need to cut back some feed early as they are a little over conditioned? Or do we need to separate some cows out and dry off early as they are too thin? As you will know, I'm not an advocate of manipulating body condition in the dry period. However, by stopping the milk production a week earlier, it will help divert the 'milk energy' back to the cow. Consider also where the B litre milk price is. Do we need to chase these less valuable litres or are the cows deserving of this extra time off?

RoMS locomotion scoring at this time is imperative, this information should be used to address any 2 or 3 scored cows to give the foot trimmer time to treat ahead of drying off. Think of it like an MOT for cows to enable her to perform unhindered in her next lactation. Our Feed Specialists are competent Body Condition assessors and fully qualified RoMS Scorers.

### 2. DRY COW FEED

How are we going to manage this large group of dry cows?

Lock up some paddocks to allow grass to seed and strip graze standing hay?

Bale up high-cover leys that will have lost some or all the nutrients applied. This is a more suitable forage source for dry cows than using what appears to be some very good first cuts. Preparation is key, so by reacting now we can implement a change to the grazing platform without affecting our grass utilisation adversely. Whichever system best suits your farm; the Harpers team can work out your required grazing prerequisite or tonnages to facilitate a smooth dry off and transition.

### 3. SEMEN TESTING

Whether it's AI straws or young stock bulls, it's worth testing ahead of using. Sadly, too often when we review the years data on fertility, we are let down by a bull not performing. The target is 9 weeks for all block calvers so any poor performance will impact this dramatically and create a larger empty rate than desired. 6% or lower is our target.

### 4. DRY OFF PROTOCOL- (LITRES)

Is there one and who does it? These procedures are the most important part of the cow's year, if we fail her here, then she is being set up to fail in the next lactation.

Milk-record one last time prior to drying off, California milk test all suspicious high SCC cows and establish quarter infections, consider treatment ahead of dry off protocol. Use the cow's Milk recording history of somatic cell count (SCC) to establish trends of elevated cells to support the correct use of antibiotics or sealant.

Seek help from your vets to train your staff on the correct handling, cleaning and disinfection of teats and application of the tube during the drying off period.

When you think the teats are clean then they are ready to be disinfected. Always work methodically with the same order of application avoiding rubbing the ends of teats already sealed with your gloves or forearms.

Looking at last year's mastitis data, if you have had higher than desired cases of mastitis in the first 30 days of lactation, these probably have been contracted in the dry period either by poor dry cow therapy or poor dry cow facilities. Also, if the threshold for sealant only cows was set at 200 SCC, consider reducing this to 150 SCC. This will cover a slightly larger percentage of the herd.

**Contact the Harpers team who are on hand to support you through this busy time and navigate your herd to a successful next lactation.**



**Richard Waters**  
Dairy Consultant  
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# MANAGING YOUR FLOCK

**As Summer progresses thoughts turn to managing ewes and lambs over the next few months to ensure growth rates are maintained, and ewes are in the correct condition to maximise next year's lamb crop.**

While lambs are most efficient at converting concentrate to liveweight when they are younger, excellent performance can be achieved post-weaning with good grassland management, health and targeted supplementation.

A good target is to have 80% of lambs sold prior to tupping and even 100% of lambs sold before 4 months of age if lambs are creep fed. The longer lambs are on farm, the greater pressure there can be on grazing systems when grass growth slows down late summer/autumn.

The focus here should be on next year's lamb crop, ensuring the ewes have adequate forage supplies, to maximise the number of lambs conceived and that both the ewe and the embryos survive through the winter.

Weaning of lambs should not be delayed as this can have adverse effects on allowing the ewe to re-gain condition, and even lambs damaging udders/teats by over sucking.

The optimal weaning age is 12-13 weeks from birth (84-91 days). After 14 weeks lamb milk intakes are negligible and so lambs are simply competing with ewes for the best feed and will do better weaned where they can get priority pasture. Consider shearing of lambs to aid with growth and minimise the risk of blowfly strike.

The best grass to offer lambs is a short leafy sward or species rich swards.

These generate a high intake, and offer excellent nutrition, which drives good growth rates. New reseeds and silage aftermath are an excellent option as these have a low risk for parasites such as worms. Mature and stemmy swards should be avoided as these have lower digestibility, energy and protein compared to the short swards and therefore result in lower growth rates.

**To discuss the best way to manage your flock over the coming months please contact your Feed Specialist.**



**Matt Dymond**  
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## FARMING THOUGHTS

**Well, that was one of the best Spring turnouts we've seen for years!**

First cut silage has been done on most farms with not a spot of rain on it. More importantly, no mud was dragged out onto the roads!

Livestock have never been happier, dry backs and a dry belly full of grass has seen stock perform! With high dry matter intakes, milk production, beef and lamb daily liveweight gain (DLWG) has been tremendous, putting pressure on farm gate prices.

With all the tariffs and conflicts around the world, currency has strengthened and feed commodities have stayed very static. Forward pricing on feed is looking very stable even with this dry spell of weather.

We look forward to seeing you all throughout the show season and at our on-farm meetings over the coming months.



**Glen Johns**  
Sales Director  
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## MAJOR MARKET CONCERNS REMAIN

**Markets have stabilised after the recent volatility, with the risks of geopolitical and agricultural upsets easing.**

The potential of a cease fire between Russia and Ukraine has increased. Uncertainties over US tariffs have eased with many countries including the UK striking deals or the levies being deferred in some way.

Funds hold short positions in key commodities with an overall bearish market. The big danger will be when they start to buy. Supplies of ingredients remain in short supply, as we wait for more shipments to arrive. This is causing a hefty spot premium.

The recent UK trade deal with the US means the UK will remove the 19% import tariff on the 1.4 billion litres of US ethanol. This is likely to raise questions about the viability of the two ethanol plants we have in the UK. They can process up to 2 million tonnes of wheat per year. They can use maize grain, but if the plants were to cease production this could lead to a greater amount of UK wheat availability from the 13 million tonne wheat crop, we are predicted to produce this harvest. The only downside is we could lose up to 600,000 tonnes of distillers from the two plants.

Growers remain reluctant sellers of new crop cereals at these current lower prices, but there seems to be an abundance of old crop wheat.

Brazil and Argentina have produced the crops anticipated, leaving healthy supplies of soya. This has left soya futures below the \$300 mark and with a weaker dollar this has left soya prices the lowest for some time. We now focus on the US plantings and with lower soya prices we are likely to see the US farmers plant more maize grain.

Rape seed production for 2025/2026 is forecast to be at record levels, with the EU set to produce 19.5 million tonnes, 3 million above last season. With the decrease in rape meal prices this could put pressure on sunflower meal prices.

Fibres are in real short supply. A smaller sugar beet crop is predicted for this year's harvest due to the dry weather and the inability to use neonicotinoids. Currently supplies are limited for the summer and soya hull supplies are also short.

**If you have any questions, please contact the office on 01409 254 300.**



**Andrew Davies**  
Operations Director  
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# REARING YOUR CATTLE EFFICIENTLY

**What an incredible spring for us farmers on the heavier Culm Measures land, we have never been able to turnout at the end of March and graze without making a mark right through April and May.**

While the lighter land needs water, the heavier land is growing still after grazing and cutting, there are some very good silages put away which bodes well for next winter. While we sell the last of the winters feeding cattle, our thoughts now turn to next season and how we are going to procure our stock. Let's focus on ensuring your production system is geared up to produce beef efficiently and sustainably.



**Bill Harper**  
Director  
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## THE FOUR KEY DRIVERS OF EFFICIENCY ARE.

### 1. Stocking rates

You need to work out what your land and buildings will accommodate. An understocked or overstocked farm cannot be efficient. If you are keeping suckler cows, have you got enough in the pipeline going forward? If you are buying calves or stirks, have you got a plan to secure the numbers you need?

### 2. Genetics

Do you know the EBV (Beef Value), SRI (Suckler Replacement Index) of the calves/cattle's sires you are buying? The difference in performance between average and top 5% is considerable. Will your calf breeder / dairy farmer use suitable genetics that you have sourced?

### 3. Nutrition

Have your cattle access to top quality grazing throughout the summer? Have you made enough 11 ME silage to feed next winter? Will you use a nutritionist to get your forages analysed and a full diet calculated for the performance potential of your cattle? Harpers Feeds have an experienced and qualified nutritionist available to you, to ensure you make the most of your farm and your animals.

### 4. Health

Now is the time to do a full assessment of your preventative health policies including, ventilation, vaccination, parasite control and mineral and vitamin supplementation. Your vet will lead on this process but please call if you want help on worming products and minerals and vitamins, both in feed and in bolus form. Massey Harpers have specialists with experience and qualifications in these areas.

## Sustainability is many things, but the key test of a sustainable system is;

1. Is your system repeatable year after year?
2. Is your grassland in a better condition year on year? The best measurement of this is the liveweight gain achieved or the volume of crop produced, improving year after year.
3. Are you testing your grassland for Soil Organic Carbon and are the results improving? This will indicate the health of your soils and will give you a baseline for Carbon Sequestration which when calculated properly will allow you to balance your emissions with your sequestration. Giving a much clearer picture for processors, retailers and consumers.

With all the above in mind, we are pleased to be working with the NBA (National Beef Association), Kepak St Merryn and Genus to host an open afternoon at Trepoyle Farm, North Tamerton, Holsworthy EX226RL on Tues 15th July 2pm start. This event will look at the farm system of 120 Suckler cows, 120 bucket reared beef x dairy calves with all stock finished at 16- 22 months of age.

**Please contact Harpers Feeds to book your place and for catering purposes.**



# HOW COOL ARE YOUR COWS?

**With the recent weather we have been having, we need to look at reducing heat stress that the cows will experience.**

The main side effects of heat stress are:

- ✓ Reduced Milk Production
- ✓ Lower Milk Quality
- ✓ Poorer Fertility Results
- ✓ Decreased Feed Intakes
- ✓ Increased stress on the cows

An average 30 litre cow's heat radiation per day is the equivalent of a person running 2 marathons a day, or likewise the same kWh requirement as running a washing machine 24 hours a day, so water intake is the first line of defence in preventing heat stress. Cows will consume on average 4-4.5 litres of water for every litre of milk produced.

This is why it is crucial to provide the herd with enough water availability but also ensure that the water trough size and flow is suitable for the number of cows. Cows should always have 10cm of water trough access per cow allowing the heifers and more timid cows to drink enough as well.

If daytime heat is too high, then consider swapping to night time grazing. Grazing the cows by night and then housing the cows through the day provides them with shade.

**For example:** a 100-cow herd doing 27 litres average will require almost 12,000 litres of water a day. Ensuring that cows have continuous access to fresh, clean water is paramount to managing heat stress effectively.

Doing this will ensure that cows can graze comfortably during the evening hours when temperatures are lower but also allows them to not huddle for shade during the day.

When cows huddle for shade during the heat, this increases stress on the cow, at a time when the immune system is lower, this can result in higher SCC and mastitis cases.

Installing fans in the shed and ensuring that good ventilation is achieved are all ways to help alleviate the effects of heat stress.

Heat stress often leads to a decrease in dry matter intake (DMI), meaning that nutritional requirements aren't met. This is why many farms see a decline in milk yield. Consider providing buffering products such as sodium bicarbonate which can help maintain rumen pH and reduce the risk of acidosis, which can further suppress feed intake. This is why careful balancing of the ration is needed, often reducing the amount of overall diet fed to the cow but ensuring that it is balanced.

In addition to this you need to monitor DMI at the feed fence to ensure intakes don't drop off, otherwise milk yields will drop off 2-3 days following.

With the warmer weather TMR rations are heating up. Selko is a product we use that focuses on inhibiting aerobic spoilage of TMR, including blends, straights and silage by helping to control the growth of spoilage microorganisms. Stabilising the ration preserves the nutritional value of the feed whilst also working to secure long-term palatability and feed intakes. All these aspects help to support animal health and performance.



**Alex Cornish**  
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A correct balance of lactic acid and butyrate in the hindgut is important, because butyrate:

- ✓ Works directly to improve butterfat yield
- ✓ Has an impact on fats in all conditions, heat stress, acidosis etc
- ✓ Is an energy source for cellular metabolism

Certain yeasts and other products can be used to reduce the heat stress experienced by the cow. In addition to this, the energy density of the diet should be increased. The use of fats for example will help to keep energy up in the diet.

**For more information on this speak to your Feed Specialist.**

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**We look forward to seeing you at events throughout the rest of the year. Make sure to pop in and see us.**

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION
<b>Royal Cornwall Show</b>	Thursday 5th – Saturday 7th June	Royal Cornwall Showground, Wadebridge, PL27 7JE
<b>Calf Rearing Meeting</b>	Tuesday 24th June	Shelton Farm, PL33 9DA . Book your place on 01409254300
<b>NSA South West</b>	Wednesday 25th June	Weston Farm, South Molton, EX36 4ED
<b>Calf Rearing Meeting</b>	Thursday 26th June	Upcott Farm, Wembworthy, EX18 7SB. Book your place on 01409254300
<b>Liskeard Show</b>	Saturday 12th July	Merrymeet, PL14 3LE
<b>NBA Farm Meeting</b>	Tuesday 15th July	Treployle Farm, EX22 6RL
<b>Mid Devon Show</b>	Saturday 26th July	Tiverton, EX16 7PP
<b>Woolsery Show</b>	Monday 28th July	Clovelly Court, EX39 5SY
<b>Launceston Show</b>	Thursday 31st July	Launceston PL15 7EZ
<b>North Devon Show</b>	Wednesday 7th August	Umberleigh, EX37 8DX
<b>Honiton Show</b>	Thursday 1st August	Gittisham, EX14 3AW
<b>Yealmpton Show</b>	Wednesday 31st July	Kitley Lawn, PL8 2NN
<b>Honiton Show</b>	Thursday 1st August	Gittisham, EX14 3AW
<b>North Devon Show</b>	Wednesday 7th August	Umberleigh, EX37 8DX

## STUDY TOURS

We have a couple of study tours on the horizon.

### TUESDAY 16TH – THURSDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER

Tailored for the spring grazers, we plan to visit grazing units, tour the Guinness factory and attend the Irish Ploughing Match. Flights from Exeter to Dublin return.

### ITALY - EARLY 2026 DATES TO BE CONFIRMED

For autumn block calvers, this trip will look at how Italian farmers are fulfilling contracts to Mozzarella and Parmesan processors while excluding maize from the dairy ration.

A series of farm visits will be planned around the Verona area. Flights from Bristol to Verona return.

**To register your interest, please call the office on 01409 254 300.**

