



ADVICE ON REVIEWING MILK PRICE CONTRACTS

With many processors implementing a tiered milk pricing system, it is important to address what this means for your business.

A and B pricing isn't new – initially it was implemented to help with seasonal milk production peaks and troughs. Now it is more to balance market requirements, both with the same aim.

Typically, "A" volume litres are set to limit the volume of milk delivered, with any excess being categorised as "B" litres.

There are several different market indicators used while calculating the milk price – Actual Milk Price Equivalent (AMPE), Milk prices.com and UK Milk Futures to name a few.

The "B" litres are calculated and treated differently using prices for spot milk, cream, skim milk and average returns from all sales. In some instances, these "B" litres can be lucrative and higher than "A" litres. So, with all of this considered, what does it mean for your business? And how should you react in the short-term to protect dairy margins in the long run?

Firstly, take the time to review the individual cows on the unit. Pay particular attention to milk yield. Aim for the milking heifers to achieve 85% of adult milk yield.

We need to adopt a similar strategy to the monogastric industry. Don't focus on the number of cows, but on the number of cubicles. If the animal standing in that space can't achieve the herd average, then she needs to be moved on. Barren cow prices are very good, so we cannot afford to keep poor performing animals and send lower value "B" litres.

The disparity between the milk price and feed costs is one of the largest I have seen in 15 years of being in the industry, so this is not the time to become complacent with feed efficiency. Tailor cow feeding, if you are able.

Feed fresh cows to retain condition and return to service/pregnancy. Following successful pregnancy diagnosis results, feed rates can be challenged. This is the only time we can challenge cows without ruining all our hard work during the transition period to get cows milking well.

Reducing feed rates is not an option while cows are still fresh, because we can't slow them down and then fire them back up, it just doesn't work.

While many processors are saying there is too much milk currently, come September/October they could want more. So, if we reduce the feed rate now too hard, we won't be able to react in a couple of months' time.

Work out the number of litres per cow required to hit "A" volume requirements and the most efficient way to do that. For example, could this be achieved by milking 100 cows giving 40 litres or 90 cows yielding 45 litres. Then, dependent on "B" pricing levels, treat those litres as variable. Whether you milk twice or three times a day, this does not change, so providing the additional "B" litres covers the feed cost and a little more to pay for additional time milking and staffing etc.

Challenge feed from forage, particularly in groups of stale cows at maintenance +10 to maintenance +12 litres from forage and, remember, as Glen always says: "cows do not know what the milk price is doing!"

Please don't hesitate to contact any of our dairy team to run through your volume predictions and make a plan.

For more information, please speak with your Feed Specialist.



Richard Waters

Senior Dairy
Consultant

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RAW MATERIAL UPDATE

While tensions in the Middle East appear to be easing, wider geopolitical risks remain that could affect our markets.

Donald Trump has threatened to place new tariffs on Russia if no peace deal with Ukraine is made by September. As the US imports little from Russia, the proposed tariffs could be targeted at nations like India and Brazil that trade with them.

Ocean freight costs rose 6% in July, largely due to Red Sea disruptions forcing vessels to re-route and reducing global freight availability.

In the UK, harvest is progressing 10-14 days earlier than normal.

Quality and yields are better than expected, with wheat production forecast at 12.8 million tonnes. However, growers remain reluctant sellers due to the poor price. France also expects a strong crop at 32.6 million tonnes, up 27% on the year. Russia and Ukraine are expecting smaller harvests due to southern droughts –84 million tonnes and 21 million tonnes, respectively. Russian wheat exports may fall, with prices below cost of production and stocks at their lowest since 2021/2022.

Global protein supplies remain strong. Record crops in South America and improved US yields (52.5 vs 50.7 bushels/acre) are offsetting a reduction in planting.

The US crop is expected to match last year's 118 million tonnes. Global stocks continue to build.

Rapeseed and canola are also abundant, with more Canadian canola meal entering the UK, which should ease sunflower meal prices.

Sugar beet supply remains limited, with few imports and a smaller domestic crop caused by dry weather in the east and pesticide restrictions. This has driven up sugar beet and soya hull prices. However, wheatfeed currently offers good value.



Andrew Davies
Operations Director
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FARMING THOUGHTS

Thank-you to everyone who visited our new Massey Harpers Village and team at the Royal Cornwall Show this year.

I must also thank the Bradley and Pinhey families for hosting two fantastic farm meetings, as well as Bill and Suzanne for hosting a meeting on sustainable beef production.

This year's harvest has been early. Grain yields are looking good, but straw will be in short supply.

With all this dry weather, standing maize is either looking marvellous or terrible. For those of you with an abundance of silage, continue making it. Next winter, I can envision farmers sending straw down south in return for forage.

I would like to welcome two new team members: **Alex Venner**, Feed Specialist covering Somerset and Dorset, and **James Miller**, Monogastric Specialist.

On another note, we are rebranding our Ewe Master range; as of today, the range will be rebranded to Super Ewe Nuts/Rolls.

Since our last newsletter, we have now become an approved feed supplier for Stonegate producers. We look forward to working with you all in the future.



Glen Johns
Sales Director
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WHAT DOES SUSTAINABLE BEEF PRODUCTION LOOK LIKE?

Last month (15 July), my wife, Suzanne, and I had the pleasure of hosting more than 220 delegates at Trepoyle Farm in North Tamerton to discuss advancing efficient and sustainable beef production.

The event was organised by the National Beef Association (NBA) and supported by Harpers Feeds, Kepak, and Genus ABS.

Attendees toured our farm, home to 120 suckler cows and 120 bucket-reared beef cattle. One of the areas I'm proudest of is our use of herbal leys under rotational grazing, which delivers 1,400kg of liveweight gain per hectare.

I shared insights into our finishing unit, where we process 275 cattle each year. Currently, our groups are growing at 1.6kg/day, fuelled by a daily diet of 4.5kg Harpers Feed and 20kg of high-quality grass silage.

Neil Shand, NBA CEO, led conversations about the changing political landscape and its impact on our industry. Prys Morgan and Liz Wotton from Kepak discussed Angus contracts and market dynamics, while Rob Burlton from Genus ABS highlighted the crucial role that genetics plays in modern beef production. Richard Waters spoke on the importance of ration formulation. The whole panel discussion, chaired by Robert Venner, offered immense value.

The afternoon culminated with a BBQ. Thanks to everyone who attended. I'm looking forward to seeing what we can achieve together for the future of beef farming.



Bill Harper
Director
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ADVICE ON WEANING LAMBS

The hot weather is starting to dry out the grass on farms, even those with heavy soils that retain moisture. With this in mind, is it time to wean lambs?

There is now a lack of grass available to the ewes, and this grass will be of poor quality, which will cause ewes to cease their production of milk for the lambs still at foot.

Although it might seem counterintuitive, weaning those lambs will give ewes the best chance to regain condition promptly ahead of tupping. Lambs can be supplemented with Harpers Lamb Finisher. Nuts to help them reach maturity and reduce stocking pressure on the farm. This diet, alongside grass, will enable the already well-grown lambs to finish quickly by boosting the energy level of their overall diet with the correct mix of starch and fibre.

Once lambs are weaned, split ewes up into groups according to BCS (at target, thin and fat) and give preferential feed to thinner ewes. It takes 6-8 weeks for a ewe to gain one BCS on good-quality grass, so supplementary feeding may be necessary ahead of mating.

For advice or more information on sheep rations, don't hesitate to get in touch with your Harpers Feeds Specialist.



Jake Chisholm
Feed Specialist
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HOW TO UNLOCK POTENTIAL IN EARLY LIFE



Keith Callender
Feed Specialist
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Last month, Harpers held two on-farm meetings focused on calf rearing. The farmers who hosted the event were Bradleys of Shelton Farm, Delabole, who milk 550 dairy cows, and the Pinheys of Upcott Farm, who rear and fatten beef.

These events featured expert talks from our team along with Laura Tennant from Trouw Nutrition, offering valuable takeaways for producers looking to optimise calf performance.

THE SYSTEMS

At the dairy unit calves are reared outdoors after two weeks indoors to ensure confidence in group feeders. They are fed up to 10 litres of milk per calf per day at maximum intake. Growth rates were very good with only four calves requiring treatment in the first 400 born this year. Only anti-inflammatories were used.

At the beef farm, calves are bought and reared in groups of 15 via an automatic feeding system. They are then taken through to finish.

MILK POWDERS

Milkivit One uses LactoFat Pro technology to replicate cows' milk fatty acid profile, improving calf performance and development as well as supporting calf immunity which optimises lifetime productivity in heifer calves*.

Milkivit Energizer offers 10% more metabolisable energy and 20% lower osmolality than conventional milk replacer, supporting elevated planes of nutrition and consistent growth with minimal digestive upsets*.

**Trouw Nutrition*

TAKE HOME POINTS

HEAT STRESS

- ✓ Affects all livestock types as well as human beings
- ✓ High temperatures and humidity can easily reduce livestock performance, comfort and productivity
- ✓ ALWAYS provide plenty of clean, fast-filling water for all classes of livestock
- ✓ If necessary, house cattle during the day, graze at night, provide fans, air flow, shade, sprinklers, all of which helps to regulate body temperature which will maintain productivity.

FEEDING

- ✓ Have feeds analysed frequently
- ✓ Balance home-grown forages and cereals to meet animals' requirement and expectations
- ✓ Monitor what the animals are telling you (Cow Signals). Consistency of dung (should sound like a slow hand clap)
- ✓ Provide plenty of feeding space.
- ✓ Watch for selection or rejection of part of ration
- ✓ Measure and monitor



DRY COW NUTRITION IS KEY TO UNLOCKING SUCCESS IN NEXT LACTATION

Taking the right steps is crucial for a smooth transition this autumn to achieve optimal results.

Dry cows require a balanced diet that includes starch and sugars to support rumen bugs so they can digest the milking diet effectively once they have calved.

They need around 120 megajoules (MJ) of energy a day and 13-14% crude protein on a dry matter basis. This translates to roughly 1,200-1,350 grams of metabolisable protein per day for an average dry cow. Diets with less than 12% protein can negatively impact colostrum quality, feed intake, and milk production in the subsequent lactation.

Alongside good nutrition, ensuring that cows are dried off at the right Body Condition Score (BCS) is vital to hit peak milk yields.

As you can see from the diagram, there is a negative impact if cows are under- or over-conditioned.

Dry cows require a minimum of 0.75-1 meter of feeding space. If this is compromised, then it is going to have a negative impact on feed intakes, especially on the less dominant cows in the herd.

Ensure that the water troughs are cleaned regularly as dry cows will still drink 50-70 litres of water a day. A minimum of 10cm of linear water trough space per cow is recommended.

With busy traffic through calving pens and yards, ensure pens are cleaned out regularly so bedding doesn't get hot, as this can aid the spread of bacteria.

Moving a freshly calved cow to a higher energy milking ration quickly after calving is crucial for several reasons.

This shift helps the cow meet the increased nutritional demands of early lactation, supports milk production, and prevents negative energy balance and associated health issues.

After calving, cows need to quickly rehydrate and replenish lost minerals and energy. Reviva can help achieve this by increasing blood calcium levels, which can prevent milk fever and stimulate dry matter intake, ultimately contributing to improved milk production and overall health.

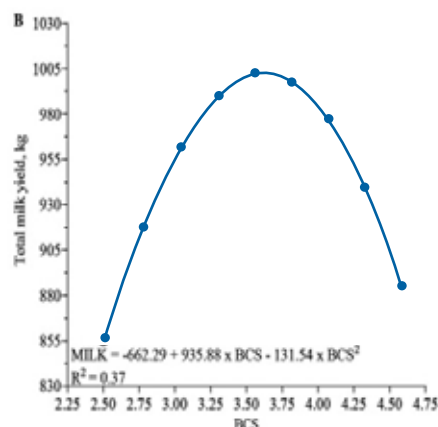
Each farm is different, so discuss the scenario that is best suited to your farm's needs with your Feed Specialist.



There are various dry cow feeding methods:

- ✓ A calcium binding approach incorporates X-Zelit, through either the Total Mixed Ration (TMR), or alternatively through our MF Eliminator compound feed. X-Zelit has several benefits for dairy cows, primarily it improves blood calcium levels at calving and reduces the risk of milk fever and other metabolic disorders. It achieves this by acting as a phosphate binder, encouraging the cow to utilise her own calcium reserves. This leads to improved overall health, increased milk production and better reproductive performance.
- ✓ The DCAD, (Dietary Cation-Anion Difference) feeding approach adjusts the blood and urine pH. You can get both partial and full DCAD diets. We would recommend doing a partial DCAD diet. The struggle with doing a full DCAD diet is that routine urine pH tests must be carried out to ensure that the nutrient balance is met. The difficulty is the frequency of tests are regular and discussions with your vets are needed to ensure these parameters are met and adhered to.

Impact of BCS on milk yields



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
North Devon Show	Wednesday 6th August	Umberleigh, Devon EX37 9DX
Honiton Show	Thursday 7th August	Gittisham, EX14 3AW
Camelford Show	Wednesday 13th August	Marshgate, PL32 9YN
Exford Show	Wednesday 13th August	Room Hill Road, TA24 7ND
Okehampton Show	Thursday 14th August	Okehampton, EX20 1SW
Dunster Show	Friday 15th August	Dunster, TA24 6NY
Laver Feeds Open Day - BOOKING REQUIRED	Tuesday 26th August	Harpers Feeds, 4pm - 8pm
Holsworthy Show	Thursday 28th August	Killatree, Holsworthy, EX22 6LP
Kingsbridge Show	Saturday 6th September	Borough Farm, TQ9 7QP