

Winter Forage Prospects

Good news – from early analyses of 1st Cut silages average samples indicate better quality than 2014 with Dry matters, MEs and Crude Proteins higher than last year.

47% of all analyses have come out at over 11ME compared to 21% last year, with only 23% showing ME lower than 10.5ME (54% 2014). With slightly improved protein contents and improved intake potential from analysis, Dry Matter intakes should be higher.

Overall, at a DM intake of 10kg the averages indicate a gain of 0.4 litres per head per day from the grass silage. Over a 190 day winter this equates to 7,600 litres extra per 100 cows.

Whilst in general silage quantities look good, each farm needs to plan the use of the available forages over the winter to maximise profits.

In addition with milk prices showing no signs of improving in the short term, concentrates costs and usages also need to be planned and as we near the end of the grass harvesting period, now is a good time to do so.

Quantities ensiled along with available feeds locally are a good starting point.

A Winter Feeding Plan:

- 1) What is the feeding period? (best estimate of first use to turn out / or first cut date 2016)
- 2) What do we need for buffer next year?
- 3) What quantities and qualities of feed are available?
- 4) Analyse own home grown feeds regularly
- 5) How many tonnes of each could be fed each day?

- 6) Can all feeds practically be fed throughout the winter (or is one cut covering another?) What are the differences in quality?
- 7) What livestock is there to be fed? Do not forget the youngstock – continue to aim for 2 year calving.
- 8) How can any shortages be made up?

Maximising Intakes:

- 1) Avoid sudden changes in diet including forage cut changes.
- 2) Provide plenty of feed space.
- 3) Refresh feed troughs at least daily.
- 4) Provide plenty of water trough space
- 5) Provide plenty of time for access to feed troughs – if necessary group cows, so standing time waiting to be milked is reduced
- 6) Feed appropriately – can forage feeding be driven harder – overall aim for 50% of the diet to come from forage
- 7) Challenge your cows – know the DM intakes and keep this as a major target compared to concentrates fed.

What Can Be Achieved?

Mid Winter 2014/15	Average Milkfinder	Top 20% Milkfinder
Yield Per Cow Per day	24.5	28.0
Yield From Forage Per day	4.5	5.6
Feed Rate	0.38	0.37
Rolling MOPF Per Cow	£1,954	£2,351

In summary review your feeds, plan their use and challenge your cows this winter to keep as much margin as possible.

If any help is required in developing a usable plan please telephone 01270 616800 and one of our local consultants will be pleased to help.