



BUCKING THE TREND

Perched on the edge of a steep hill on the western fringe of the Peak District might not appear to be ideal for a grass-based system, but Paul Dean is making it work and is expanding on the back of his success at Midgley Farm, Wincle.

Paul farms a total of 840 acres in partnership with his brother Alister, spread across three locations with land rising to 364 metres (1200ft).

The objective is efficient production of milk solids rather than pushing for high yields from each of the farms, choosing the approach best suited to the farm and capitalising on each farm's major asset - grass.

The herd at Midgley has been once a day milking for nine years because the grazing land is quite spread out, so the cows have to walk up to a mile on difficult terrain to come into the parlour.

They have been cross breeding since 2000 because even though the cows were Friesian, they were becoming too big. They are looking for a smaller cow, weighing no more than 500kg and started using New Zealand genetics to introduce some Jersey before introducing more Friesian again because they find they can cope better with the climate here.

Milk from the 200 cows at Midgley Farm goes to Arla on a constituent-based contract. By mid-lactation, the cows will typically be giving 5.44% fat and 4.3% protein, totalling 300kg of milk solids over the duration of the lactation.

The aim is to calve six weeks before magic day, which on average is 23rd April. The cows are initially on a 60-day grazing rotation and this will be reduced to 24 days by the end of April. The farm is split into 32 six-acre paddocks and they graze one paddock per day.

Grassland management

Although grass is the mainstay of the diet at Midgley, Mr Dean feeds 0.5kg of concentrate to all the cows in the parlour throughout the summer. He says it is much harder to achieve consistency within the diet when grazing. Through careful grassland management, he aims to achieve 12-12.5ME and 24-25% protein across the grazing platform.

Working closely with Massey Feeds on the grass analysis has highlighted they are achieving plenty of milk from grass alone.

Masseys were quick to come on board with their strategy and supply a low protein (12%) high energy concentrate with a FiMLAC mineral pack which has organic copper, selenium, zinc and manganese, designed to fully mineralise the cows at a lower feed rate. Rumen health is better and the cows get back in calf much quicker on this diet.

Cows are dried off in time for Christmas and hay is fed just prior to calving with a Massey Feeds low protein dry cow roll. Paul says he has had the easiest calvings since feeding this way. There is very little milk fever, mastitis or displaced abomasum post calving.

Seven years ago, they approached two brothers at Hammerton Farm in the same village who were looking to wind down. They now contract farm with them and have 180 cows on a Spring and Autumn calving block. These cows are slightly bigger than at Midgley, weighing about 550-600kg, but its is a flatter, kinder farm. They supply a volume contract with Muller for Sainsburys from there.

Then, two years ago they heard a farmer near Macclesfield wanted his farm to be home to a milking herd again. The Deans now rent the 72ha Symondley Farm, milking 170 cows.

The herd is all year-round calving and supplying Arla on a manufacturing contract. Symondley Farm is all grass and is largely self-sufficient except for some brought in wholecrop. Paul adopts a step feed system, feeding a maximum of 6kg/per cow per day to cows in the first 100 days of lactation.

Paul insists the system at each farm is 'simple' and this is his secret to success, Paul is open to opportunities and does not want to stand still.

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Phil Stirk
Sales Director
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HERD PERFORMANCE

62% average conception to first service across three farms

375 days average calving interval across the three farms

Annual milk solids

Midgley Farm 300kg/cow

Hammerton Farm 435kg/cow

Symondley Farm 547kg/cow



FARMING THOUGHTS

At the start of the New Year we have the political changes that lie ahead, but as an industry we must prepare ourselves for the challenges that will affect all sectors of agriculture in 2020.

Agriculture is facing a long-term challenge as the world population is set to grow by 2.3 billion by 2050. The knock-on effect for this is that food production will be required to rise by 70% by 2050 compared to 2005 levels.

The challenge of feeding a growing population lies in providing a sustainable livelihood for farmers while protecting the environment. This will be a real balancing act as consumer pressure increases.

As a business we are always keen to highlight the strengths of our industry and promote how food is produced. As the main sponsor of the teacher training programme, for the last 5 years, in conjunction with Edge Hill University and Cheshire Agri-Centre at the Cheshire Agricultural Show, we are delighted to see that the Agri-Centre is a finalist in the Secondary Educational Bayer/Leaf Education Awards. Our 'Milk Daisy' educational programme at the Agri-Centre lets children milk the cow and demonstrate what cows eat and drink to produce fresh milk. They also get a free milkshake.

It's a simple but effective way to get our message across, helping children understand how milk is produced.

This year you will see our Sales Teams at the following shows:

- Staffordshire County Show
27th/28th May
- Cheshire County Show - 16th/17th June
- The Pig & Poultry Fair - 12th/13th May
- UK Dairy Day, Telford - 16th September
- The Westmorland Show - 10th September
- The Cheshire and Brailsford Ploughing Matches in September and October.

We look forward to seeing you at some of these shows as we work enthusiastically to raise the profile of agriculture throughout 2020.

For any enquiries or for a 2020 Massey Feeds Calendar, please contact the office on 01477 536300.

Have a Happy New Year.



TIME TO SELECT THE OPTIMUM MILK REPLACER FOR YOUR SYSTEM

The skimmed milk market price has been rising considerably over the past few months and is currently around 30% higher than in April 2019. This has resulted in higher calf milk replacer prices, with products containing the highest proportion of skim seeing the greatest increase.

Prior to this large market change, the industry had seen a significant increase in the use of skim-based calf milk replacers - a trend which often occurs when the whey and skimmed milk market prices are aligned, due to the misconception that whey powder is a lower quality product than skimmed powder. This is certainly not the case; the fact is that different milk replacers suit different systems.

Milk feeding protocols and product selection should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure calves are receiving the correct nutrition at any given time. However, milk replacer price changes are very often the only time a review is initiated, creating a great opportunity to not only save money, but potentially boost performance at the same time.

Several factors should be considered when selecting the type of milk to feed:

- Feeding system/frequency
- Feeding consistency
- Breed and sex of calf
- Feed rate
- Weaning age
- Disease challenges
- Whole milk price

Whole milk is often very inconsistent quality and lacks the required vitamin and mineral level that calves require. Added to the fact that whole milk left standing prior to feeding accumulates bacteria at an astounding rate, high levels of performance can often be difficult to achieve when feeding whole milk. That said, it is possible to overcome all of these issues with very high levels of management, so whole milk should not be discounted, especially when the milk price is falling. The fact is, however, that feeding a quality milk replacer is still cost effective while farmgate milk price remains above 23ppl.

Often the main decision to be made is whether to use a skim or whey-based milk replacer. When buying from a reputable supplier, both options will provide a high-quality product. Skim based products are often a better option for herds with higher levels of disease challenge or systems that lack consistency i.e. varied feeding times. However, many milk replacers are sold as skim-based when they actually only contain minimal amounts of skimmed milk powder. Research shows that a minimum inclusion level of 25% skimmed milk is required for it to have any nutritional benefit. Whey based milk replacers are often a more suitable option for farmers opting for earlier weaning.

Cost not only consideration

Both skim and whey based milk replacers have their place, but deciding which product best fits your system requires careful evaluation. With as much as a £500/tonne variation between different milk replacer formulations, it is common to see decisions being made on cost alone. However, the cost of the product should not be the only consideration.

In reality, a reduction of £500/tonne equates to a saving of just £17/calf. A calf fed on the incorrect product, suffering digestive upset and reduced growth rates could easily cost you more than any potential saving. However, a saving of £17/calf is extremely attractive provided performance can be maintained while moving to a lower cost milk replacer.

Choosing the correct milk replacer for your system and improving youngstock performance will allow you to reap the financial benefits.

Speak to your Massey Feeds representative or our Youngstock Sales Specialist to review your calf rearing system.



Rachael Kenneley
Ruminant and
Youngstock Specialist
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FOCUS ON EWE NUTRITION IN COUNTDOWN TO LAMBING

Lambing time will soon be upon us, so now is the time to make sure your ewes are well-prepared for lambing and can produce healthy, vigorous lambs.

Remember, a healthy ewe will produce a plentiful supply of milk with good quality colostrum to aid the lambs' immunity and health. Ewes need to be in good condition with a body condition score of between 2.5 now and 3 at lambing. If not, your thinner sheep will need grouping and feeding accordingly to allow them to gain condition. If they are very thin, check for diseases such as liver fluke and treat appropriately.

Don't forget to get your silage analysed, so you can purchase the correct concentrate to complement it and work out the correct feed rate. Around 70% of lamb growth occurs in the last six weeks of pregnancy so your compound feed rate needs to be increased over this time to supply the ewes' increasing requirements. Start at 0.25kg/day increasing to 1.0kg/day just before lambing, depending on forage quality. If feeding over 0.5kg/day split it into two feeds.

At Massey Feeds we are always looking at how to improve our compounds. This year we have introduced IntelliBond minerals from Trouw Nutrition to enhance the mineral supplement. The unique formulation aids absorption, improves rumen function and increases feed stability.

All our sheep feeds now contain zinc as an IntelliBond along with Zinc Bioplex and Zinc Oxide to further aid better feet, udders and faster lamb growth. Optimum levels of selenium, as selenium selenite and Alkosel, along with good levels of vitamin E and Trouw AO mix are included to ensure good quality colostrum for lamb vigour and immunity. Vitamin B1 is now included to help prevent CCN (Cerebrocortical necrosis) along with cobalt and vitamin B12 to help counteract pine.

If you want to know more about our quality diets or need your silage analysing, please contact your Massey Feeds Specialist.



Paul Drake
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Commercial Manager
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NEW PRODUCTS GET FORAGES PERFORMING



Despite better grass silage stocks this year, some farms are finding that grass silages are not performing as expected.

On paper diets are correct and balanced but the cows, still the best indicator of how good a ration is, just aren't milking as we would like. The truth is, there are a myriad of different reasons for this.

1. The first is that fibre (NDF) levels are very variable with early cuts returning high lignin levels indicating that grass leys didn't stop growing last winter. Low NDF levels combined with high ADF levels will leave the rumen short of hemicellulose, which is vital for the production of glucogenic energy which drives milk production. This will also reduce fibre digestion.

To supply additional glucogenic energy; it will be necessary to add more rapidly fermentable carbohydrates to the diet but this must be done carefully as they run the risk of lowering rumen pH.

This will have a further negative impact on fibre digestion and may increase the risk of acidosis.

2. I am also seeing a large number of farms having problems with mycotoxins with silages spoiling and going mouldy even though clamp management is good. Mycotoxin binders have worked in some cases but on other farms they haven't helped and the inclusion of an additional clay binder has been required to alleviate the problems.

3. We are also seeing a lot of grass silages that have a very high amount of lactic acid. Warning signs of high lactic acid levels include decreased cudding activity with less than 60 chews per cud), reduced daily Dry Matter Intake, diarrhoea and increased laminitis. It can also cause dehydration, liver abscesses and lung infections.

Herds experiencing any of these problems will generally be producing milk with very high butterfat and protein percentages but will be finding cows a couple of litres off the pace.

New products

Rumen Buffers can help by lifting rumen pH. Carneo Boost actively converts lactic acid into propionic acid and has been shown to reduce lactic acid levels by 19.6%. It also reduces methane making the diet more energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

We are also now supplying pHix-up, a rumen buffer containing three different grades of calcined magnesite which degrade at different rates in the rumen and helps maintain a more favourable rumen pH. for a longer time period than other products. Farms already using pHix-up have seen a significant increase in butterfat percentage.

Talk to your Massey Feed Specialist about reviewing your diets as we enter the second part of the winter.



Dai Lewis
Technical Commercial
Manager
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CHESTER CATHEDRAL PLOUGH SERVICE

Massey Feeds is supporting The Plough Service at Chester Cathedral on Sunday 12th January.

Plough Sunday celebrations involve bringing a plough into the Cathedral with prayers for the blessing of the land. This tradition will be upheld by Cheshire YFC.

The Plough Service is traditionally held on the Sunday after Epiphany, the Sunday between 7 January and 13 January. In years gone by work in the fields did not begin until the day after Plough Sunday, which was called Plough Monday.

Although the way we farm has changed over the centuries, Plough Sunday allows us to celebrate and support the farming community.

The service also aims to raise money for three charities:

- Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy
- The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution
- The Addington Fund

Service Details:

Sun, 12 January 2020

15:30 – 16:30

Chester Cathedral
Saint Werburgh Street
Chester
CHI 2DY

For more information please visit:

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/traditional-plough-service-tickets-72503763709



FERTILISER UPDATE

As a key distributor of Origin Fertilisers, we can offer the widest choice of products, including Origin's Enhanced Efficiency range.

If you are looking to maximise grass utilisation this spring, try Origin's Sweet-Grass, which combines Nitrogen and Sulphur with Sodium for optimum palatability and intakes. Independent research at Bangor University showed an 18.6% increase in dry matter intake leading to a 9.3% increase in milk production from applying Nitrogen plus Sodium, compared to Nitrogen alone.

Are you interested in saving money on Nitrogen and Nitrogen Sulphur fertiliser? Origin Enhanced-N (OEN) offers ammonium nitrate yield performance at a significantly lower cost due to increased

Nitrogen use efficiency.

The continued uncertainty surrounding Brexit combined with excessive rainfall has significantly reduced fertiliser market activity compared to last autumn. With a backlog of deliveries building and potential logistical difficulties in the spring, now is the time to consider ordering your spring fertiliser to ensure delivery in January.

The value of having product in the shed ready to apply at the start of the season will be greater than ever. We can offer terms on delivery and payment.

Contact your Massey Feed Specialist for more details on the wide range of products.



Dawn Jones
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RAW MATERIAL UPDATE

Raw material prices have firmed as a result of a combination of different circumstances.

Currency has had a bumpy ride from the highs of a £:\$ rate of 1.33 in March dropping to lows of 1.20 in mid-August but firming strongly to 1.31 in early December.

On the physical side, in December we saw a spike in soya prices of £15/tonne overnight on the news of Vicentin, one of Argentina's biggest crush plants, not meeting short term payment obligations. Hopefully, this will be a short-term problem and the premiums will reduce because soya was looking competitive going forward

Also in December wheat had rallied £10/t but may have found its ceiling for the time being because for the first time for a while exporting doesn't look as attractive.

Winter plantings are causing concern, but some farmers have managed to drill into some better seed beds as the wet weather subsided slightly.

Going forward there doesn't seem to be a lot of cover on for the summer yet. Shippers are offering pockets of raw materials but the trade is waiting to see where the General Election result settles out.

Fasten your belt it's all about currency short term!



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