



MANAGING GRAZING DIETS

Although turn-out might still seem a distant prospect given the heavy rain and water-logged fields, hopefully thoughts can soon turn to getting cows out at grass. We have been focussing on fine-tuning our grazing diets.

We are continuously looking for new innovations and products to further our existing range to help ensure cows are able to produce optimal yields and milk constituents, while achieving good fertility and health.

Our FIMLAC concept is now well-established and should be familiar to you all. The feeds in the range are based on a blend of raw materials that are low in Microbial Protein Nitrogen (MPN), but high in Microbial Protein Energy (MPE). This reverse ratio complements grazing perfectly, promoting a healthy and efficient rumen to maximise the contribution from forage.

Balanced minerals

Ensuring an effective mineral supply is also essential to optimise the contribution from grazing. The FIMLAC mineral premix is formulated to maximise health and fertility, using chelated sources of highly bioavailable minerals. Copper levels in cattle diets remain under scrutiny by the regulators and all our products have been reviewed and copper levels adjusted to ensure the optimum supply in line with current regulations. We have also removed copper Sulphate from all our mineral premixes - if it is an anti-microbial in a footbath, it is an anti-microbial in the rumen!

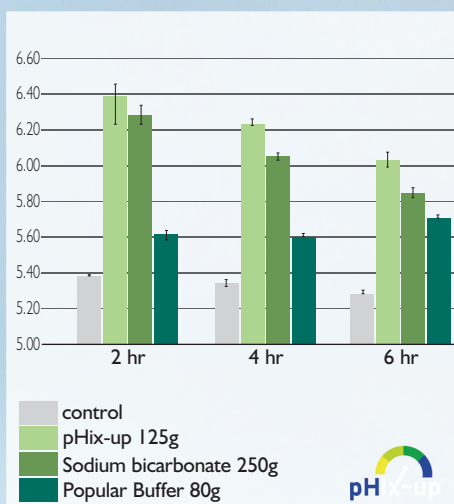
Our premixes now all contain the Intellibond hydroxy minerals from Trouw Nutrition which reduce gut irritation over sulphates and have shown enhanced fibre digestion, increasing milk butterfat levels due to improved rumen health.

Maintaining Rumen health and ensuring a stable rumen pH is of vital importance when cows are grazing spring pastures where the grass will be high in sugar but very low in fibre. The high sugar content makes the grass highly fermentable, passing through the digestive tract quickly. This, coupled with reduced fibre levels, can result in sub-optimal rumen pH leading to an increased risk of acidosis and milk fat depression, potentially hitting milk prices too.

We have been looking at a new rumen buffer, pHix-up, which has been shown to deliver significant benefits and is backed by sound research, supported by our own on-farm trials.

Superior buffer

In trials, pHix-up was compared to both sodium bicarbonate and a widely available rumen buffer to determine the effect on rumen pH. Over a six-hour period, pHix-up resulted in a higher rumen pH being maintained for longer than the other products (see graph), meaning that rumen digestion will be enhanced, improving the efficiency of use of the diet. Our on-farm trials have not shown a yield increase but have shown a marked lift in butterfat.



Within a fortnight, butterfats had increased from 3.88% to 4.12%. Financially this is worth an extra 1 ppl on the current Arla contract so a considerable return on investment.

pHix-up will be included in our Butter Boost range or can be used as a standalone solution to the inevitable decline in butterfat when cows go out to grass. pHix-up is a blend of three different grades of magnesium that degrade at complementary rates, it also gives complete protection from grass staggers while avoiding scours associated with feeding high levels of calcined magnesite.

We will also continue with the inclusion of Novatan, to ensure efficient protein digestion. Novatan increases the levels of MPE whilst reducing MPN, therefore lowering blood and milk urea concentrations. The cow is then able to use the energy provided in the diet for production and fertility rather than the excretion of excess nitrogen.

For further information or to discuss your plans for the grazing season, please contact your Feed Specialist.



On one of my customers' farms the cows were milking very well but we felt there was an opportunity to increase butterfats, important as he is on a constituent-based contract.

We replaced 100g/cow/day of a widely used rumen buffer with pHix-up at the same rate. Nothing else was changed and this herd was peaking at 80 litres/day milking through robots.



FARMING THOUGHTS

Thank goodness the stalemate within British politics has been broken. After three years of wrangling since the country voted to exit the EU, a new era began on 31st January. There is still a lot at stake, and everything needs to be sorted by 31st December.

On the trading front lambs are trading well, with the export market favouring the UK. This also applies to the pig sector which has benefited from the African Swine Flu losses sustained in China and other South East Asian countries.

Dairy margins remain thin, with milk prices ranging from 24-32 ppl. One thing that has been highlighted this year is the need to play to your strengths, and exploiting your milk contract, whether you are on a liquid or manufacturing contract. Improving butterfat and protein content for the latter contract could see prices over 28ppl.

We have been trialling a new natural rumen buffer, pHix-up, this winter. A number of farms I am involved with have found it is proving a more cost effective and environmentally friendly way to improve milk quality than C16 protected fats.

The structure of the industry continues to evolve. We are seeing more and more joint venture opportunities arising which will allow some producers to retire and others to benefit from share farming or contract agreements, contract rearing agreements and equity partnerships. This is something we discussed in the recent Dairy Farmer 'Progressive Dairy' Supplement where we highlighted one of our customers Paul Dean, who now successfully runs three herds on different farming agreements.

Looking to the future at Massey Feeds I am delighted to welcome two new dairy sales specialists to our sales team. James Thomson and Will McNiece have joined the company at the start of February and will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the company.

We are looking forward to working with them.



Phil Stirk
Sales Director
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GAME BIRD HEALTH UPDATE

William Garton MRCVS – Avivets

There are three key areas to mention in preparation for this year's game breeding season:

1. British Game Alliance (BGA)

The BGA has been formed as a marketing initiative to help promote the consumption and sales of shot game. As we all know, this is vital to the survival of our industry and for the promoting a positive message to the public and consumers. Top end retailers who are interested in stocking and/or serving game, such as Waitrose, M&S, Ministry of Defence, NHS, and export markets such as Europe and Asia are demanding to know the traceability, origin and standard to which UK game is produced. Because of this demand and the need to prove traceability for food safety standards, the BGA will be introducing auditable standards to all hatcheries, farms and estate that join their scheme. Whilst this is a great move for the benefit of the game bird sector, the British Veterinary Poultry Association (BVPA) are still in consultation over the details of the standard, including the proclaimed 'accredited' Mycoplasma gallisepticum blood test. Please note, the scheme is completely voluntary.

Traceability and auditable standards are only a good thing for the longevity of the game farming and shooting sectors. We need to be able to prove our high standards to keep activists at bay. Keep yourself informed on the progress of the BGA and speak with friends and colleagues who have joined before committing yourself. Remember, no biological test is ever 100% reliable or 100% sensitive. Consult your veterinary surgeon should you have any concerns about mycoplasma testing.

2. Mycoplasma gallisepticum

This horrible disease continues to cause big head aches for game farms and shooting estates. On the whole, mycoplasma (bulgy eye or swollen head) was much better controlled last season even though the weather and especially the rearing conditions were atrocious. However, we are still faced with the double-edged sword of antibiotic resistance (especially from mycoplasma) and antibiotic reduction. Avivets has completed sensitivity testing on lots of mycoplasma cultures over the last year and we now have a very good appreciation for which drugs appear to still have good, if not excellent, effects on mycoplasma. Further to this we also have a number of alternative therapies to help reduce our reliance of antibiotics.

The debate over mycoplasma vaccination continues; my stance is that the requirements of each breeder flock and each game farm are different. Until we no longer rely on caught up breeding birds, we will be faced with the uncertainty of mycoplasma status from the birds we wish to breed from. Yes, testing is available, but as mentioned, no test is 100% reliable (including blood serology and PCR) so always take your vets advice when interpreting test results.

3. Alternative wormer

An alternative wormer to Flubenvet (flubendazole), licenced for use in pheasants, was introduced to the veterinary market last year. Gallifen, is a fenbendazole and licenced to treat Heterakis gallinarum (caecal worms) in pheasants over a 5-day treatment period. The wormer is available as soluble water treatment, which has excellent solubility, or as an in-feed premix. Please be aware of the differences on the licence, Flubenvet carries the licensing for treatment of all worm species, including gapeworm. If in any doubt over which wormers is best for your birds contact your vet.



THINK QUALITY NOT PRICE WITH MILK POWDERS

With skim milk prices on the rise, I have had several discussions with customers who are considering switching to a cheaper skimmed milk based milk replacer thinking it will reduce costs.

My advice has always been the same. With pre-weaned calves you have a literally once in a lifetime chance to get them off to the best possible start. Young calves are capable of exceptional growth rates and are laying the foundations for the organs that they need for a long and productive life.

The first 8-9 weeks are absolutely critical so this is a period for investment in quality and achieving the best performance possible, not to cut corners. Calves have the potential to achieving outstanding feed conversion efficiency so you need a feed which will allow calves to exploit this potential to get strong, healthy calves and a good return on investment.

Lower-priced skimmed milk feed are cheap for a reason. While they will be based on skimmed milk, the actual skimmed milk content will be lower than a quality product and it is this lower inclusion rate combined with a long list of other ingredients which allows them to be cheaper.

They may claim to be similar energy and protein to a quality milk replacer but you need to check where the energy and protein is

coming from as the sources being used may not be digestible by young calves.

For example, a high skimmed milk product will have most of the protein from dairy sources which are very well digested by calves. The casein in the skimmed milk is essential as it forms a clot in the abomasum where it is slowly broken down. However, in a product with a lower skim inclusion you will see vegetable protein sources on the ingredient list – products such as linseed, rape and soya which calves cannot digest.

Focus on quality

The same is true for energy. Fat is an excellent energy source but only if calves can digest it and it contains the right balance of essential fatty acids. Calves also need a small and consistent fat globule size.

Vegetable oils, often included to boost energy in low skimmed milk powders are less digestible than products like coconut and palm oil found in better quality products.

If you are serious about rearing the best calves you can, you only have one chance to do this and so should be focussing on quality, not price when it comes to feeding them in the critical first 8-9 weeks of life. The extra cost per tonne for a high quality replacer is insignificant compared to the benefits you will see as calves develop and enter the herd.



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Ruminant and
Youngstock Specialist
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YEAST HELPS PREVENT LOOSE COWS AT GRAZING!

We all know that when cows are grazing spring grass they tend to go 'a bit loose' which is a real inconvenience at milking time. To help improve use of grazing, we are adding a live yeast to our Butterboost range this spring.

Loose dung is a sign of poor rumen digestion due to sub-acute ruminal acidosis (SARA), particularly if gas bubbles and undigested fibers are visible. The financial implications of compromised rumen function can be significant as milk quality can be reduced, and cows fail to milk to their potential at grass.

Levucell C (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae* CNCM I-1077) from Lallemand Animal Nutrition is a proven rumen specific yeast which helps increase fibre digestion and stabilise rumen pH, reducing the risk of Sub Acute Ruminal Acidosis (SARA). Through better rumen function and feed efficiency cows can digest and utilise grass better and Levucell SC has been proven to increase milk yield and quality.

Last year, Levucell SC was trialed in a grazing herd in Ireland, producing 7500 litres/year milked through robots. The herd was split based on days in milk and yield, with half the cows being supplemented with Levucell SC (1×10^{10} cfu/h/d) while the remaining half received no yeast.

The cows supplemented with Levucell SC produced on average 0.5L more milk per day with significantly higher fats and proteins than the un-supplemented cows. Dung quality also improved, with un-supplemented cows being much looser. Having completed the trial and run the figures, the additional milk solids versus the cost of the yeast gave a return on investment of 6:1.

Performance	Control	Levucell SC
Milk yield (kg/d)	28.70	29.22
Milk protein (%)	3.39	3.43
Milk fat (%)	3.97	4.14



Unsupplemented cow

Improving rumen health at grazing will help maintain milk quality and make milking a more pleasurable experience.

For more information, talk to your Feed Specialist.



Richard Ford
Ruminant Sales Specialist
07968 529 332



Levucell SC supplemented cow

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE TEAM

We are delighted to welcome two news members of our Feed specialist team who both have a combination of practical farming experience and a background in the feed trade.



Farmer's son Will McNeice is originally from Armagh, Northern Ireland but now lives in St Asaph. He joins us as Sales Specialist for North Wales.

A Harper Adams graduate, he worked on a major dairy unit in Cheshire for 18 months running the calf and heifer units before joining Devenish Nutrition as a Graduate in Ruminant Sales Support focusing on mineral nutrition and milk powders. In 2017 he joined Mole Valley Farmers as Ruminant Product Manager in the North of England.

"My main aim within my new role is to ensure I'm not just a salesman but that I add value to my customers' business," Will says. "Farming is changing and I believe we should all be held accountable for the inputs on farm as they all are key to driving sustainability and efficiency."

Will can be contacted on 07787-104570



Royal Agricultural University graduate James Thomson brings over 5 years' experience working with farmers to his role as Sales Specialist in Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Cheshire and Shropshire.

James hails from Leek and spent his degree placement module with JCB Farms Ltd. After graduating he gained more practical experience both farming and contracting for 12 months, before working as a forage specialist. After 18 months he moved to Mole Valley Farmers as a Ruminant Specialist.

"I have a real passion for grassland and increasing milk from forage," James comments. "I enjoy using Cow Signals to monitor performance and believe we need to consider the whole dairy cow life cycle to create more efficient systems and improve profitability long term. I also have a particular interest in robot milking systems"

James's mobile number is 07870-896601

FERTILISER UPDATE

The 15th January marked national Nitrogen day, as the closed period for applying manufactured fertiliser finished in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ's).

For anyone lucky enough to be able to travel, early fertiliser applications this year will see a huge response as the over winter rain is certain to have drained the soil of Nitrogen and Sulphur.

It is unlikely that we are going to see prices fall further as demand comes on, so orders placed in March will still offer great value, as well as aiding in timely delivery for application when the ground allows. We can offer split payment terms on request, as well as a full range of NPK fertilisers.

For increased grassland utilisation and rumen function in the spring, please ask your Massey Feeds Specialist contact about fertiliser enriched with Sodium.



MASSEY DAIRY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Keep your performance on track with our dairy costings

For more information, talk to your Feed Specialist.

Monthly Results		Cumulative from April	
This Month	Last Year	This Year	Last Year
Herd Details			
Herd Size	205	208	202
Animals in Milk	197	202	171
Heifers Calved	4	0	43
Cows Calved	9	3	15
Cows Dry	4	2	43
Cows Sold	7		
Milk Data			
Sold	208,056	181,149	1,405,066
Retained	3,100	2,000	19,100
Total Milk Produced	211,156	183,149	1,424,166
Milk Price	30.38	31.54	28.91
Total Milk Value	63,938	57,766	7,046
Yield / Animal in Milk	34.6	28.2	2,034.1
Yield from Forage	10.5	7.2	2,034.1
Yield from Bulk Feeds			
Milk Quality			
Butterfat	4.28	4.32	4.01
Protein	3.47	3.48	3.48
SCC	78	0	21
Backscan	19	0	93
Milk Urea	0	0	
Feed Usage			
Dairy Cakes	72.08	68.20	0.00
Other Concentrates	0.00	68.20	0.37
Total	72.08	136.40	0
Feed Rate	0.34	0	328

YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A TONNE OF MILK POWDER!

Trouw Nutrition are giving all dairy farmers the chance to win one tonne of their Energised Calf Milk ABSOLUTELY FREE – and its really simple to enter.

All you have to do is take a photo of you and your calves or calf, upload it to their website at <https://ruminants.lifestartscience.com/energized-calf-milk> and then complete a simple sentence.

If you are an ECM user, complete the sentence,

"ECM has improved my calves because..."

If you do not yet use ECM, complete the sentence,

"I believe ECM will make my calves..."

The closing date 31st May 2020 and the best entry in both categories will win a tonne of Energised Calf Milk - Enough to grow 20 strong and healthy calves.



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