



FREQUENT TESTING ALLOWS FINE-TUNING

Grass silage has the potential to be a very variable feed, both in terms of dry matter content and nutrient value. This means it needs to be analysed regularly to ensure the diet accurately reflects forage quality to drive efficiency.

It is inevitable grass silage will vary throughout the clamp due to the considerable number of variables that interact during its production, whether in a single cut or across multiple cuts in a season.

Starting at field level, the composition of the sward will influence heading dates and timing of harvest. High quality, specific short-term silage leys will mature differently and have different fermentation and feeding profiles to a longer established ley. The result is variations in feed value depending on the proportion of different grass mixes throughout the clamp.

Then there is timing of fertiliser application across different fields and the ability of the sward to convert nitrogen into protein which will influence how well it will ferment.

Harvest management

Weather conditions during the growing periods will also affect maturity. Weather at harvest will potentially delay cutting date and influence the rate of drying down and the number of times the crop is moved in the field. This has certainly been a big issue this season.

Then there is the management at harvest. Does the contractor arrive on time and are all fields at the optimum cutting stage? The reality is that there will be a range of maturities when the mower goes as the aim is to get silage made as quickly as possible, meaning harvest ploughs on regardless of if the crop is at the best stage.

Weather and even time of day affects the rate at which grass dries out, increasing the prospect of variations in dry matter of ensiled grass.

2020 FIRST CUT GRASS SILAGE ANALYSIS

Date	26/8	6/10	29/10	2/12	19/2
DM (%)	37.4	43.0	36.4	32.6	41.3
ME (MJ/kg DM)	10.9	11.0	10.4	10.2	10.6
CP (% DM)	12.5	12.4	13.4	14.2	12.9
NDF (% DM)	45.8	45.7	46.4	48	45
Freshweight required to supply 10kgDM to 100 cows (kg)	2673	2325	2747	3067	2421

At the same time, if some grass is left down longer than other cuts then this will affect energy content within the clamp.

Finally, differences in clamp filling, rolling and sealing will have an impact on forage consistency, especially if multiple cuts are ensiled in a single clamp.

Last year, one of our customers in Derbyshire, who milks 200 cows averaging 10,000 litres, wanted to keep a tight rein of forage in the diet and analysed all silages frequently. The first cut clamp contained grass from a number of different swards. The results for the first cut are in the table and these allowed us to keep a close check on performance.

Supplementary feeding

There are variations in all the key parameters and if we had not adjusted the diet then milk from forage would have fluctuated considerably. The difference in ME meant the value of the diet could vary by over a litre per cow per day. By reacting to the analysis we could change the supplementary feeding or the mix of forages to maintain yields, ensuring cows did not lose condition and fertility didn't suffer.

Massey Superlac Opti 16 was fed at a constant rate throughout the winter, but we varied the formulation and quantity fed of a bespoke mix to balance the total diet in response to changes in the forage analysis.

One of the biggest variables we had to contend with was dry matter, reflecting different fields and weather. As silage gets wetter, if the fresh weight fed is not adjusted then performance could fall.

If we wanted to feed 10kgDM per cow to a group of 100 cows, the amount of freshweight needed would vary from 2325 – 3067kg per day.

Knowing the dry matter, we could adjust the freshweight needed on the feed sheet to ensure sufficient silage was going into the feeder wagon to maintain intakes.

Between October and December, dry matter and ME fell, so diets needed adjusting to reflect this. By February, dry matter and energy had increased so we were able to fine tune supplementary feed, balance the rumen and avoid risk of acidosis.

Due to lockdown there was a bigger interval between analyses than we would like to see. With more regular analysis this year we will be more proactive and take account of changes in the forage, adjusting the balance of forages and supplementary feeds to keep the cows performing.

Speak to your Feed Specialist about getting your silages analysed regularly this winter.



Richard Ford
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FARMING THOUGHTS

As restrictions start to be lifted, we can start to take the next steps towards some sort of normality. We are looking forward to attending a number of shows with Westmorland and Stafford standing out. We look forward to catching up with you at these and other events.

The UK has recently agreed a free trade agreement with Australia and even though it may take time for the supply chains to develop to the satisfaction of UK retailers, this will need watching closely. Australia is a global power house when it comes to exporting beef but is coming out of a period of extended drought and currently is not exporting as much as it has in recent years. What this trade deal opens up is the prospect of more worrying trade deals with countries like Brazil and Argentina who will not be meeting the same welfare, traceability and medication standards as we do in the UK. However, it is encouraging to see that currently beef and lamb prices have been at an all-time high for this year.

Silage results indicate those first cuts harvested very early are very young and lacking fibre. The majority of farms cut later, at the end of May, when protein and energy had started to drop. So even though crops were large, we are seeing lower feed value and higher fibre and lignin levels. Providing additional energy and looking after the rumen will be the key to getting the best from these silages.

On the poultry side, we have a processor looking to develop the quality free range chicken market around our mills at Holmes Chapel and Preston. If you have buildings that can grow birds from day old to finish, with access to go outside, please give us a call.

And finally, I have been watching the new series on Amazon Prime, Clarkson's Farm, which has been entertaining yet realistic about our industry. The series follows Jeremy Clarkson as he takes over running his mainly arable farm in the Cotswolds. It's a must watch series and I would say over the last few months it has done more to enhance British agriculture than programmes like Countryfile. Good on you Jeremy!



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PLANET RANGE STILL SETTING THE STANDARD



Last year Massey Feeds became the first feed compounder in the UK to respond to the demand to reduce soya and palm usage in dairy feeds.

Dairy farming faces many challenges with perhaps the greatest being to significantly reduce its carbon footprint and to move to net zero carbon milk production. British farming is being driven towards a more sustainable and environmentally friendly footing and the government has committed to creating a legally binding net zero carbon target for 2050.

This will require changes to many aspects of how dairy farms are managed and feeding is no exception. Many milk processors are already demanding changes to production systems.

Feeding cows accounts for around 60% of the carbon cost of dairy farming so is a good place to start making changes. The Planet range has been formulated to help dairy farmers move to net zero carbon by eliminating the use of ingredients linked to environment damage while also helping improve feed efficiency for cost-effective sustainable production.

Planet Dairy feeds contain no soya meal, no soya hulls, and no palm kernel. They have been replaced with proven ingredients with a lesser impact on the environment including rapeseed, sugar beet pulp and wheatfeed.

Increasing the efficiency of milk production is another essential way to contribute to net zero carbon, so the Planet Dairy range contains speciality ingredients to help drive feed efficiency.

Novatan is a blend of essential oils which reduces the rate of protein breakdown in the rumen and stimulates protein syntheses by the rumen micro-organisms.



This reduces blood and milk urea levels and cuts energy wastage. The FiMLAC high performance mineral pack contains essential minerals and vitamins in the optimum bioavailable form to ensure cows are sound on their feet, have a robust immune system and get back in calf quickly.

Good results on farm

Since their launch we have been getting positive feedback on the range as farmers find it is possible to replace soya and palm products and not compromise on performance.

Jarl Pearson from Higher Blakelow Farm near Macclesfield has not fed soya or palm to his herd of 166 British Friesians averaging 7000 litres for over two years. The aim is to build numbers up to 200 cows. The all year round calving herd grazes and are buffer fed during the summer.

Performance from grazing complemented with the Planet compound has been excellent. Cows have milked well with high milk quality to help make the most of the contract. In June they averaged 4.26% fat and 3.22% protein while in July the figures were 4.15% and 3.30% respectively. Cows have maintained body condition and fertility has been excellent.

There is no doubt the focus on reducing the environmental impact of milk production will increase so we are committed to expand the Planet range to help customers along the journey to net zero.

For more information speak to your Feed Specialist.



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NEW GOAT RANGE LAUNCHED

Our new goat range will help get the best performance from milking and growing animals.

Historically goats in the UK have been fed and rationed with the assumption they are 10% of a cow.

While in certain respects such as food intake, body-weight and milk yield this is a fair assumption, in others, this is not the case. For example, goats are browsers and not grazers. Contrary to popular belief, they are extremely fussy about what they will eat.

The speed of digestion is faster and they don't like change. As a result many UK formulations have inadvertently resulted in digestive upsets.

Massey Feeds new goat range has been developed to provide the optimum nutritional requirements for goats at all growth and production stages.

All the products have been formulated to compliment the greater rate of digestion found with browsing animals, and so help prevent digestion upsets while giving maximum performance.

For growing animals the range is made up of goat starter pellets, rearer nuts and a finishing nut. For milking goats we have formulated a milking nut and a specialist transition nuts. All products are available in minimum four tonne bulk loads and milking and finishing nuts are also available in 25kg bags.

All the product formulations have been developed under UK conditions, with excellent results which provides reassurance that these products will provide good performance on farm.

For more information speak to your Feed Specialist.



Michael Parkinson
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FEEDING SHEEP AT GRASS

With the price of lambs as high as they have ever been, we must make sure that they are farmed to the best of our ability so margins can be maximised. By the time you read this, most lambs will have been weaned, weighing as near as possible to 30kg at 90 days old.

It is now important to body condition score ewes, feeding the thin ewes by putting them on better pasture, before turning them away in readiness for tupping. If ewes are very thin further investigation needs to be done, looking for signs of worms or other deficiencies.

Now is the time to decide what you are going to do with your lambs. Are you going to sell them as stores or fat? Are you going to keep your gimmer lambs or sell them in the store market?



The next decision is how you are going to feed those lambs. Do you have enough good quality grass to maintain the growth rates needed to achieve your aim or do you need to buy in a concentrate to supplement grazing. In an ideal world, grass should be 8-10cm high for optimum weight gain.

This can be hard to manage with the variable weather we have been having this year, going from very dry to very wet.

The variation in feed value, altering very quickly as grass moves from high fibre to low fibre can cause rumen upset leading to scouring.

Minerals and trace elements can also be deficient in an all-grass situation especially when dry matter intake is poor due to restricted growth. If your lambs aren't thriving as well as expected then it is worth checking the grass or doing blood samples to check mineral levels.

A good quality lamb creep such as Hi Gain Lamb Pellets or Progrow Nuts will help overcome any shortfall in minerals and vitamins and will ensure lambs gain weight, growing more quickly to help you reach your marketing goal.

For more information speak to your Feed Specialist.



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REDUCE ENERGY SHORTFALLS WITH CRIMP

Following a challenging grass silage making season, crimped cereals could be a good way to balance lower quality silage which could be lacking in energy.

Crimp is the perfect option to help make up for an energy shortfall, as it easily reaches 12 MJ/kgDM at around 60%DM, providing energy in a rumen friendly form. It is a higher energy way to preserve cereals than wholecrop and has the added benefit that the straw is still available for bedding or feeding. The crop is harvested at 35-40%DM before being processed by a contractor with a specialist crimping unit which cracks the seed coat and exposes the starch.

As with all moist feeds, it is vital to ensure they are well clamped to reduce the risk of waste and using an appropriate inoculant will be essential.

Magniva Platinum Crimp is specifically designed for use in the preservation of moist grains. It's a biological option which ensures faster preservation, while helping prevent heating and spoilage at feedout.

By using an inoculant and following ensiling best practice it is straight-forward to produce a high energy feed which will help make up any shortfall and help ensure cost-effective rumen-friendly diets this winter.

For more information, speak to your Feed Specialist.



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RAW MATERIALS UPDATE

Cereal crops look great now that the rains have come and filled the grain-well. Although this has caused real issues on the old crop barley as we have almost run out and await the new crop to help spot prices. It is estimated the UK will produce a 7 million tonne barley crop, down from 8.1 million tonnes last year.

The UK wheat crop is predicted at 14-15 million tonnes, up from 9.65 million last year. Wheat at £15/t above barley will mean more wheat is used this season. The East coast ethanol plants will pull a lot of wheat out of the Yorkshire grain field which will impact on prices.

Soya has softened as colder, wetter weather appeared in America at the critical pod filling time.

We will need a good crop to start replenishing stocks but if there are any worries of weather problems, then the funds will look to take the market away again. Rape is being harvested on the continent and will be getting closer here, hopefully putting harvest pressure on the winter.

Soya hulls look expensive against beet pulp for the winter trading at only a £10 differential. Wheatfeed, which has been in real short supply since last October, is becoming more available as lock down gives way.

One of the main factors that will affect all commodities is freight rates and haulage costs. Shipments around the world have increased significantly and there is going to be massive pressure on haulage costs with fuel, parts and new vehicles increasing.



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SHOW DATES

With the relaxation of lockdown restrictions, we are excited to be attending shows around the region again and catching up with customers. We are attending the following events and look forward to seeing you there!

Date	Event	Venue
7th Aug	Garstang Show	The Garstang Showfield, Preston, PR3 1JS
25-26th Aug	Staffordshire Show	Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford, ST18 0BD
8-9th Sept	Westmorland Show	Lane Farm, Crooklands, Milnthorpe, LA7 7NH
15th Sept	UK Dairy Day	International Centre, Telford, TF3 4JH
6th Oct	Brailsford and District Ploughing Match	Bradley Pastures, DE6 1LP



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