



PRECISION FEEDING BOOSTS MILK QUALITY



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Maximising milk price within your contract is key to producing higher margins. Recent analysis by AHDB suggests dairy farmers who fail to achieve the minimal levels for fat and protein are foregoing £55M in income, and this is before the value of missed bonuses is included.

Supplying milk to First Milk Nestle on a manufacturing contract, milk protein content is economically important to Robert and James Barrow, Robert's wife Hazel and their son Paul who milk the 200-cow pedigree Langhurst Holsteins near Appleby-in-Westmorland in Cumbria.

The all-year-round calving cows typically graze from late April until the end of September before being housed in cubicles on a grass silage-based diet. In the summer, the cows are buffer fed with grass silage and 4.5-6kg of a Massey Feeds meal comprising maize, wheat, sugar beet, soya and rape depending on grass availability. In the winter, the diet is grass silage, a fat and blend. Throughout the year they are looking for M+28 litres from the base diet. FIMLAC Milkboost 18 dairy compound is fed to yield in the parlour.



James, Paul and Robert Barrow

Cows are averaging 10,427 litres with a calving interval of 383 days. Maintaining milk quality is vital to maximise milk price under the contract. Milk protein is valued at 4.798p per litre per percent above a base of 3.1%. Failure to achieve 3.1% leads to a deduction.

The Barrows have always worked to keep proteins up and tried various approaches, including altering the balance of energy in the blend and increasing total protein in the diet but never achieved the increase they wanted.

Proteins were a particular problem in June 2021 and throughout the summer with the lowest test of 3.12%.

The typical approach to attempting to improve milk proteins is to increase either starch or total protein content in the diet, but this is often not the most cost-effective. A more effective approach is to look at more precise supplementation.

Amino acids

When you feed protein in the diet you are in fact feeding amino acids which are the building blocks of protein. What cows really need is a carefully balanced supply of amino acids.

As soon as an amino acid becomes limiting, in other words there is not enough to meet the cows' requirements, the performance of the cow is affected. In most UK dairy diets, methionine is the first limiting amino acid with an estimated 85% of diets being deficient. Once this happens cows will draw it away from milk protein production to maintain yield.

The usual response to try and increase amino acid supply is to feed more protein, in the hope that more of the limiting amino acids get

through unscathed to be absorbed. The result is that cows are fed too much protein.

A typical UK dairy diet is 17-18% crude protein, but a diet formulated to balance amino acids will be 14-16% crude protein, reducing total protein costs.

Assessing the Barrow's diet for total amino acid balance showed the cows were short of digestible methionine. So they agreed to trial adding MetaSmart® as a by-pass digestible methionine source in the blend.

Return on investment

MetaSmart® is a unique rumen-protected methionine which can be added to compounds and blends. By adding methionine you can address methionine deficiency and increase milk protein, milk yield and help support health and fertility. Additionally, MetaSmart® contains some rumen active methionine which plays a role in increasing milk fat.

Adding MetaSmart® increased the price of the blend, so the Barrows agreed to try it for two loads to see what sort of return they got. No-one likes paying more for feed but they hoped they would see an effect quickly.

The new blend was first used in mid-August and at the end of the month milk protein had increased to 3.25%. In October protein was running at 3.39% and butterfats have increased too, now running at 4.4%.

Milk protein has certainly improved since MetaSmart® was added, meaning they are now receiving the bonus. The next stage will be to look at reducing the total protein in the diet as this will help with carbon footprint and the environmental impact.

FARMING THOUGHTS

At Massey Feeds we pride ourselves on helping our customers manage their costs and optimise their profitability by improving production efficiency on their farms. This is something we are determined to continue to do.

The feed industry is going through an extended period of unprecedented uncertainty, the like of which has never been experienced before. This is affecting costs throughout the supply chain.

Raw materials have carried on rising significantly. Changes in weather patterns in the UK and across the world are having a major bearing on all raw materials yields and prices, in particular the cereal market. There is no respite in the raw material market going forward with pricing set to continue to rise. We will aim to keep the cost increases of our products to a minimum, and will continue to help farmers maintain their profitability by working closely with them.

UK production of fertiliser could also be drastically reduced with the knock-on effect being reduced yields next year.

Everyone is seeing increased running costs on their businesses with electricity increases together with fuel price increases for wagons and tractors.

For our own business this equates to an increase in over £6 per tonne compared to previous years.

This period of uncertainty is likely to continue for the foreseeable future but by working together we can minimise the impact and strive to maintain the high level of service that you have become accustomed to as a valued member of Massey Feeds.

For example, in the run up to Christmas it is all about logistics and supply. Making sure the ingredients in the right place.

Please help us, help you by placing your order in advance and allowing some flexibility and options on your delivery dates, this will help us maintain the most efficient service for all our customers.



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LOOK AFTER ORPHAN LAMBS FOR HIGHER SALES



Kate Rooke
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Choosing the optimum lamb milk replacer can have a significant impact on lamb sales and flock profitability.

A recent survey showed that 55% of sheep producers expect to artificially rear up to 5% of lambs born, with another 14% of farmers anticipating this number will increase to up to 10% of all lambs. Major contributors to the number of these lambs are orphans and lambs from ewes with poor milk supply, with a proportion being from triplets.

Managing successful artificial rearing must be a priority, as achieving 5-10% more lamb sales will have a big impact on the bottom line.

This is why we supply Milkivit Energized Lamb Milk which is precisely formulated to fully support lamb performance and health. With highly digestible energy and protein sources, it helps minimise the risk of digestive upsets.

Newborn lambs have limited energy reserves, so Milkivit ELM provides sufficient energy in a highly digestible form to help them survive and maintain body temperature as well as ensuring a strong immune system, while promoting high

liveweight gains. The inclusion of carefully selected minerals and vitamins ensures the lamb has all the trace elements needed.

Milkivit ELM is suitable for warm bottle or adlib machine feeding at a rate of 175g/litre, in 10kg and 20kg bags. Milkivit ELM is available as either skim or whey based.

By investing in a milk replacer formulated for high digestibility, you can ensure lambs get the nutrients they require for good health and performance and help give them the best possible start in life.

To find out more about our products for successful lambing, give Kate a call.



FORWARD THINKING NEEDED FOR GAME

The COVID pandemic has caused great difficulty with the planning of the 2021 game rearing season. A crystal ball would have been very welcome to try and predict where we would be in terms of potential disruption due to the re-introduction of restrictions. Fortunately, however, the government has held its nerve on opening up and we are enjoying a relatively restriction-free 2021 season so far.

Partridge shoots have been a success from the start and early reports on pheasants appear positive. Customers who lost out on days last year, are keen to spend what money they have saved and some are paying for extra days which is very encouraging. The high demand for shooting this season is warmly welcomed given the loss of revenue experienced in 2020 as a result of the COVID restrictions which wreaked havoc in our industry.



Looking forward, we are facing a number of notable challenges in our industry, particularly increased input costs. For example, gas for rearing, fertilizer for game crops and

wheat prices have all risen sharply, to name just a few. These factors will all have to be monitored closely and on a regular basis, given the volatility in the market. Ensuring businesses are functioning efficiently will be vital in order to keep the impact of rising costs to a minimum.

Another challenge will be the issue of game dealers refusing to accept game that has been shot with lead shot. It would be a very useful exercise to look into all available alternatives to lead shot, ensuring that individuals and businesses are ready for when this comes into force next year.



John Forbes
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STRONG START DELIVERS TOP QUALITY FINISHED CATTLE

Trials carried out at Harpers Adams showed that feeding beef calves on higher rates of milk replacer will improve weight gain in the pre-weaning period and that these benefits carry right through to slaughter on an intensive system. And we are now seeing these results in practice.

A combination of elevated rates of milk replacer and Massey FiMLAC Sweetstart calf feeds is setting beef cross calves up for excellent growth rates and grading on a Derbyshire customer's farm.

At Park Farm, Stanley, near Ilkeston, Andy and Sue Collins finish around 60-80 dairy bulls calves per year on an intensive system with finished cattle sold at 12-13 months. Calves, mainly Holsteins but with a few Montbeliardes, British Blues and Brown Swiss, are usually purchased at 2-3 weeks old.

They feed Milkivit Energized Calf Milk twice a day and feed six litres per calf with a total intake of 810g of milk replacer per day. They are looking for calves to double their arrival weight by the time they are weaned at 56 days.

The calves have access to Sweetstart pellets, fresh water and straw from the day they arrive on the farm. The target is intakes of around 0.5kg/day of concentrates at four weeks old, gradually increasing to close to 1kg/day at six weeks. Weaning starts at around seven weeks old when calves move onto once a day milk feeding. Milk is stopped when intakes of dry feed are 2kg/day.

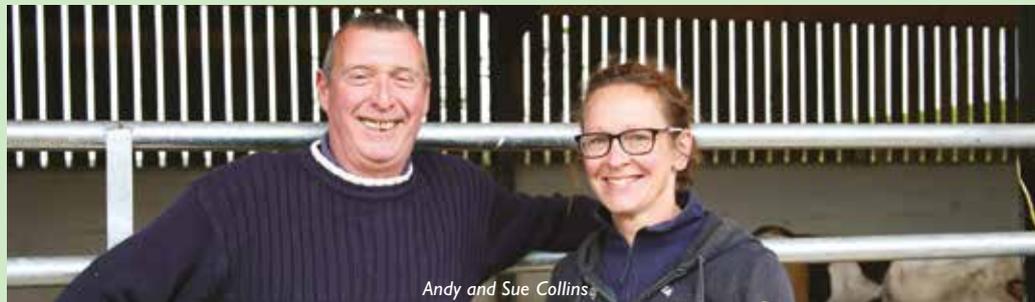
After weaning the cattle move onto a diet based on Massey 70/30 beef nuts before being finished on Massey Steakmaker.

The results have been impressive. The first British Blues were sold at an average of 377 days old, with a carcass weight of 318.7kg, grading at R3. They averaged 1.7kg/day liveweight gain.

The investment in a high energy milk replacer and a carefully formulated calf concentrate was repaid in a better quality animal at slaughter.



Richard Ford
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Andy and Sue Collins

HOW WELL IS YOUR FEEDER WAGON WORKING?

Your feeder wagon is the second most used piece of machinery on the farm, but are you making sure it is used as efficiently as possible? Like any machine, it must be well-maintained, properly calibrated and then used correctly. If any of these three is not 100% right then performance will suffer.

Are the knives sharp?

Make sure the knives are correctly fitted and in good condition. Ensure the operator checks for the signs of excessive wear. Sharp knives cut the diet effectively and ensure a homogeneous mix. Once they start to lose their edge the quality of mix and the chop length will decline. Also, sharp knives require less power to deliver a mix and can help reduce mixing times.



Is it weighing accurately?

Correct calibration is crucial to make sure ingredients are added correctly. Weigher inaccuracies are often the cause of diets not feeding as expected which will affect yields and rumen health. Best practice is to calibrate the feeder once a month.

Is it used correctly?

Correct operation is essential. It is not uncommon to hear cows don't milk as well on the day the usual feeder wagon driver isn't working. Anyone tasked with feeding cows needs to follow a standard procedure to ensure consistent feed is supplied.

Feeds must be added in the correct order for the type of feeders and mixing times need to be adhered to. Over-mixing in particular can compromise diet structure.

Remember, feeding cows is not a job that can be rushed.

Overfilling is a common problem and the cause of poor mixing. Feeder wagons have a stated capacity for a reason so don't exceed it.

Make sure you have sufficient PTO power. Despite high diesel prices, running with a smaller tractor or reduced RPM to save costs is a false economy.

Watch it in action

Watch how a load is mixed to ensure the process is effective. It is not unusual for the wagon to mix effectively when it is only partly full, and problems occur as more weight is added. This is an indication that the knives may need replacing. If low inclusion ingredients don't mix well, try adding them down the side wall instead of directly over the augers as these ingredients can stick to the augers and will then never mix.

Definitely make time to watch a mix when forages change. Wet silages have a tendency of balling and not chopping correctly while dry silages may not mix as well so it may pay to add some water.

Make time to walk down the feed fence after a load has been put out. Is it mixed consistently? Are there signs of uneven incorporation of concentrates?

The time invested in making sure the feed wagon is working and being used as effectively as possible could be time well spent as the cows will milk better, make better use of the diet and help maintain profitability.



Dai Lewis
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RAW MATERIALS UPDATE

Challenging times would be an understatement when considering all aspects of your business at the moment.

Haulage has been, and is still, a problem in terms of both cost and actually getting product into the mill. Going further down the line, freight is in the same position for goods coming onto these shores. For example, Liverpool has no palm kernel which has caused a convoy of wagons going to Portbury while we wait for the November boat to arrive, hopefully in early December. Even if you have forward ordered, it still doesn't give you a guarantee of it arriving in the mill

These issues, combined with the volatility of other aspects of the market, have seen raw materials firm beyond reasonable expectations. Wheat stocks are tight. This has created a lack of farmers selling, forcing the price to new record levels. Spot wheat is at £245/t for December and £253/t for the run to harvest with barley trading £10 behind.

Last year we were at £200 for wheat into the mill with barley at £155 – a £73 increase.

Wheatfeed is £216 for January – April another £30 above last year. PK and soya hulls are trading extremely firmly at £222/t and £232/y respectively and both have issues at source and with freight.

Proteins are no different, with Europe short of rape but Australia is about to harvest a predicted bumper crop. Rape will go into the second half of winter at £1310/t which is £60/t above last year. Distillers may come under pressure in the New Year if Vivirgo starts up after its long shut down.

Maize is one product which has performed very well and world stocks for 2021/22 are 12.5 million tonnes up year on year. This could put pressure on wheat. For the second half of the winter maize is trading at £260 with the summer at £255, which starts to challenge wheat at its present levels

As everybody is aware we are in difficult times at the moment but are working to ensure we are well covered in all key ingredients.

YEAST FOR EFFICIENT TRANSITION

Our transition diets now contain a live yeast which helps cows transition more efficiently.

The rumen specific live yeast, Levucell SC helps stabilise rumen pH and stimulate the growth of beneficial microflora, which improves fibre digestion and feed utilisation. This is especially beneficial when transitioning from a high fibre dry cow diet to a high concentrate early lactation diet, as it helps prepare the rumen microbiota for this dietary change.

Trials have shown that adding Levucell SC to the diet can increase the average rumen pH by up to 0.5 units, reducing the risk of acidosis. A study carried out in 2018 found that when it was fed prior to calving, the rumen wall was better prepared, improving its integrity and reducing inflammation associated with stress around calving.

Trials have shown that feeding Levucell SC from four weeks pre-calving as part of a daily ration supports high feed intakes in early lactation, with an average increase of a 1.5kgs dry matter intake. This results in an extra 2.3 litres per day and 0.7kg/day reduced body condition loss which is important for future rebreeding.

To find out more about our transition feeds that contain Levucell SC, talk to your feed specialist



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MILL TOURS

Every year we welcome a wide range of groups to our Holmes Chapel and Preston mills including Young Farmers, discussion groups and colleges for an explanation of the skill and care that goes into producing our feeds, including a tour of the mill.

If you would like to arrange a tour of the mill, please call us on 01477 536300 or email Sales support at: Shereena.holborow@masseyfeeds.co.uk

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR OPENING

We will be closed on Christmas Day, Christmas Day Bank Holiday, Boxing Day Bank Holiday, and New Year's Day Bank Holiday.

Our Christmas order deadline is 10th December and our New Year order deadline is Friday 17th December.

Please help us help you by providing as much lead time as possible during the holiday season. Thank you for your co-operation.



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