



## ATTENTION TO DETAIL WILL MAKE DIFFERENCE THIS WINTER

### **Adopting an open mind to ration formulation will be crucial to getting cows milking cost-efficiently this winter in the face of predicted continued higher ingredient costs.**

Producers will not be able to do a great deal about raw material costs this winter as global factors continue to dominate markets. They will be able to do something about milk price by ensuring cows produce well and that any milk quality bonuses are achieved.

Taking things out of the diet to save costs or moving to a lower cost feed may be tempting. But will performance hold up or will it suffer? While you may not see an immediate impact on milk yields, there could be longer term consequences for reproductive performance or for cow condition in late lactation.

To get and keep cows milking efficiently it is essential that everything in the diet is there on merit and delivers. Choose ingredients for the diet based on supporting science and the value they bring, not just price. The diet needs to let cows perform cost-efficiently, establishing and maintaining a healthy rumen and achieving an acceptable cost per litre to make the most of better milk prices.

Anything included in the diet must be appropriate to the forages available. Cows do best on a consistent diet and the ingredients must correctly supplement the forages to encourage optimal dry matter intakes and better utilisation.

Getting forages analysed at least monthly throughout the winter, taking a representative sample to take account of variations in dry matter and nutrient levels will allow the diet to be fine-tuned as required. Our Feed Specialists will be happy to help with sampling.

Correctly formulating the core diet so it is tailored to the requirements of the milk contract will help make the most of available bonuses. Investing to improve milk quality will be important for many herds, but equally if your contact does not pay more above a base level of fat, don't spend money chasing higher quality.

Look closely at sources of energy as well as at total energy supply to make sure rumen health is optimised. Pre-cut grass testing results suggest that there may be higher NDF in silages this year which will require rapidly fermentable energy sources to encourage better fermentation in the rumen, faster rumen throughput and higher intakes.

In this case a relatively cheaper fibre energy source could be less effective than a slightly more expensive starch source. Paying close attention to starch and sugar levels in the diet will be important, along with the NDF levels.

Looking at protein, the diet needs to be balanced for metabolisable protein. In many cases this might allow a reduction in total protein fed which could bring a saving.

Trace elements play essential roles in keeping cows healthy and productive so are not an area to economise on, but equally there is no benefit from over-supplying. Make sure all

minerals have high bioavailability, meaning they are used more effectively by the cow. Some organic mineral sources can be used to great effect, supporting immune function, reproduction and milk production.

Then it is important to ensure that the diet is delivered effectively too.

Make sure the mixer wagon is filled in the correct order and is run for the specified time. And regularly check the weigh cells to ensure the correct amount of feed is being included.

If the feeder is overweighing, then less feed will be used potentially leading to poorer performance which is nothing to do with the cows or the formulated ration. If it is underweighing, you will end up using more feed, potentially increasing feed costs per litre and feed waste.

Calibrate parlour feeders and out of parlour feeders monthly. If they are under weighing then the consequence will be that as well as feed use being increased, there will be a risk of late lactation cows becoming too fit. If overweighing, then fresh calvers could be getting short changed and may fail to peak as expected. Again this is nothing to do with the formulated diet.

As an example, if a herd is expecting to use 1000kg/day through the parlour and the feeders are under weighing by 5%, the consequence will be that 1.5 tonnes extra will be fed per month. The time taken to check feeders will be well-invested.

Working closely with your Masseys Feed Specialist, making use of the available science to formulate your diets and then monitoring all aspects of performance closely it will be possible to deliver cost-effective and efficient diets for the winter.

**For information, speak to your Feed specialist.**



**David Wilde**  
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**It is good that the pressures on the game and poultry sectors due to Avian Influenzas are reducing. However, the poultry industry has lost 1.9 million birds across the laying sector with no increases in prices. The egg industry is in the balance as margins are squeezed by increased prices for all inputs.**

In the dairy sector, Arla's farmgate milk price is set to rise by 4.49ppl from 1st June. This 10% price increase for members will lift prices to 47.79ppl, based on a standard manufacturing litre. However, other milk buyers need to follow their lead quickly otherwise we will see more farm sales. These are still difficult times and I can foresee the national dairy industry dropping below 5000 producers for the first time within the next two years. Many traditional family dairy businesses will be at a crossroads, having to decide whether to push on or call it a day as all costs continue to increase.

At Massey Feeds, we will have to respond to the challenges facing our customers. Adding greater value to our customers' businesses will be crucial. Our sales team will need to operate at not only a superior technical nutritional level but also at a consultancy level with a full range of technical and practical support available.

Working more efficiently will be the key with some feeds sales being carried out by office-based campaign teams using modern communication platforms alongside seasonal sales campaigns for other sectors like beef and sheep..

We will continue to develop our range of non-manufactured products (minerals, additives, fertilizer, milk powders, bulk feeds etc) to bring well-researched solutions to improve efficiency on farm.

We are fully aware that the next few years are challenging times for us all, but working together to improve efficiency and inspire our customers has got to be the way forward.



**Phil Stirk**  
Sales Director  
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**Volatile and uncertain are probably the best way to describe the current raw material market as we experience prices we have never seen before, driven predominantly by reduced global production and ending stocks of wheat.**

The crisis in Ukraine continues to be at the forefront, with the main concern being how many exports will take place. Exports over land are happening but this has its problems and restrictions, including different rail track gauges between countries and long delays at borders. Road, rail or barge exports have a target of three million tonnes per month, but there are concerns we will only get to 1.5 million tonnes. The big question is whether and when we will see any Black Sea exports. It has been reported that Russia have been stealing wheat within excess of half a million tonnes already seized and being exported through Crimea.

Some good news is that Ukrainian farmers are a resilient bunch and spring plantings are progressing with 51% of crops planted by early May, although this is 16% down on the same time last year. The main problems are the lack of fuel and restrictions on working day length. Normally operations are done 24 hours per day, but night time working is not permitted as the lights become a target for the Russians and Ukrainian farm machinery has already been targeted by missiles.

Other major news has been the announcement of an Indian export ban on wheat due to their drought. However, they have allowed a half million tonne shipment to go to Egypt in June and July. The news of the ban made wheat jump by £25/t, pushing it above the £350/t mark.

Global wheat supply is a real concern with a 774.8 million of production forecasted, 4.5 million tonnes lower than last year. Main points are the reduction in Ukraine to 21.5 million tonnes, down 11.5 million tonnes on last year, with reductions in Australia and Morocco. This is partly offset by increased production in Canada, Russia and the US. With the price of wheat rallying many other products are riding on the back of this. Sugar beet availability is likely to be lower with a smaller UK crop, so we will have to rely on imported supplies which will be limited with the restrictions on Russian material.

Proteins seem to be the best value relatively as they have not increased as much as other products. Soya looks good value even though we have seen a drop in the value of the pound. Some cover is now being taken for next winter before we enter the critical growing stage of the US crops where we could see volatility.

With ingredients at record prices, low production and low stocks, several factors could lead to a price drop?

- If exports resume out of the Black Sea.
- If global biofuel mandates are reviewed? Two million tonnes of wheat go into ethanol production in the UK alone. The argument of food or fuel will be an interesting one this year
- Some feed rationing will take place. In the UK there has been reductions in the pig herd and poultry flock as some enterprises become unviable.
- The current COVID situation in China could lead to less demand.

**To discuss any of these points, please call us on 01477 536 300**



**Neil Warburton**  
Raw Material Director  
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# MANAGING DRY COWS AT GRASS

**Monitoring dry cow condition will be particularly important this year with farmers looking to make more use of grazing.**

Depending on ground conditions, it may be tempting to keep cows out longer in the autumn. However, it's important not to expect too much from late lactation and far off dry cows at grass.

It is important to make sure that extra milk production from late lactation cows does not come at the expense of body condition. These cows will prioritise milk yield at the expense of condition, meaning they could be drying off thinner than is ideal.

Monitoring body condition is equally important in far off dry cows because you want them entering the close-up group around 2-3 weeks prior to calving at the target condition score of 3.00-3.25. This allows them to prepare for calving and, in particular, produce the vital immunoglobulins needed for colostrum.

## **Optimum condition**

Ideally you want cows drying off at the optimum condition score and to maintain that score throughout the dry period. The dry period should not be seen as a time to gain condition.

Cows that are over-conditioned, with a BCS over 3.25, are at greater risk of post-calving problems such as ketosis and of poorer reproductive performance in the subsequent lactation. Equally, cows that are too thin with a BCS below 3.0 are at greater risk of lameness as the hoof pad is thinner, increasing the incidence of foot problems.

A recent review by researchers at the University of British Columbia, found that over or under-conditioned cows were one of the biggest at-risk groups for transition cow disease. There was also a greater risk of ketosis in grazed dry cows, compared to housed animals.

Talk to your Massey's Feed Specialist about condition scoring all cows at drying off so you know what challenges you may be facing.

Grazing should be managed to meet the requirements of the cows. They will need 100-110MJ per day for maintenance and calf growth, assuming no increase in liveweight.

## **Control intakes**

Assuming good quality grazing, a cow will only need to eat 9-10kgDM of grazing per day to meet her energy needs. Consider strip grazing, increasing stocking rates or smaller paddocks to restrict grazing availability and avoiding cows getting too fat. Put some straw or lower quality haylage in a ring feeder to allow cows to have higher overall dry matter intakes.

Where cows need to gain some condition, they will need 110-120MJ per day. Make sure you don't overdo gaining condition in dry cows as this will increase the risk of fatty livers which need to be avoided.

Thinner cows will benefit from pastures with better covers, while over-conditioned cows will do well on aftermaths or older leys which are higher in fibre and lower in energy. As you move into the autumn, it will be important to compensate for declining grazing quality by allowing intakes to increase.

Ideally, keep cows on paddocks which have no potash applications in recent years to help reduce the risk of milk fever.

Carefully managed, far off dry cows can be expected to perform perfectly well on mid- and late season grazing, helping reduce purchased feed costs and labour while preserving forage stocks for the winter.

**For more information, speak to your Feed Specialist.**



**Samuel Wellock**  
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# FRESH LOOK AT BEEF RATIONING

**Beef producers could soon have a revised rationing system to help them finish cattle more cost-effectively, and Massey Feeds have been actively involved in the project.**

Beef rationing systems have still based on the AFRC 1983 recommendations, meaning there have been no meaningful advances for nearly 40 years. But in that time we have seen major changes in breeds and genetics, developments in finishing systems and movements in the market requirements for weights and specification.

The new five year project run by AHDB and the Centre for Innovation Excellence in Livestock is looking to revise beef rationing, reviewing existing equations and comparing them with the latest data from research centres around the UK.

The result will be more accurate predictions of forage dry matter intakes and total dry matter intakes along with revised protein and energy requirements which take better account of differences between bulls, steers and heifers as well as beef from the dairy herd which is an increasing important market sector.

Hopefully there will also be a better prediction of how diet can affect carcass composition and characteristics so affecting eating quality.

As soon as we can, we will incorporate this work to help you develop more efficient rations to grow your cattle more effectively to meet market requirements.



**Paul Drake**  
Beef and Sheep  
Commercial Manager  
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## CHALLENGING TIME FOR GAME

The UK game industry has been in limbo since the outbreak of Avian Influenza firstly in this country and latterly in France. The impact of the infection in this country has been relatively controlled and the consequences have been mostly manageable. The impact from the outbreak in France is huge due to the reliance on imported eggs and chicks.

The fundamental issue is that early partridges and pheasants reared in this country largely come from overseas predominately France, either as eggs or chicks. There is some supply from Spain, Portugal, Hungary and Poland but it is limited. Without France producing early partridge and pheasant chicks we would have a huge hole in our supply for shoots across the UK. It is estimated the UK could face a shortfall of 50 - 70% with French supply disrupted. The full extent will depend on how many chicks can be reared from UK laying stock and also on how many eggs and chicks are sourced from other countries.

The knock-on effect is huge with some business's having nothing to rear or shoot. This affects the communities that rely on shooting to bring in much needed income to often quite remote parts of the UK. With the cost of living at near an all time high, it could not have happened at a worse time. It will also affect the feed industry considerably as requirements will be well down.

British game farms with high health laying stock are in an enviable position and able to command a high price for their stock due to the severe shortage in the industry.

As with any distressed market, there are some partridge and pheasants on the market that may have a lower health profile. This is because any hen caught up is being used for breeding and some may not have been tested for the likes of mycoplasma which can be transferred through the egg. If and when chicks from infected birds come under any stress clinical signs will begin to appear and could cause havoc for poor unsuspecting recipients of these birds.

All in all it will be a testing year for the game industry as a whole and it could start to change the way breeding stock is viewed in this country with a move to try and shorten supply lines to avoid the potential problems the likes of AI have caused this season.



**John Forbes**  
Game Specialist

## USE AN INOCULANT TO REDUCE WHOLECROP WASTE

When it comes to ensiling wholecrop and crimp, the higher dry matter means it's harder to compact. If not compacted properly, there will be a greater risk of oxygen pockets within the clamp, leading to yeast and mould activity, which increases the likelihood of spoilage in the clamp.

Preventing spoilage and waste is important in any year, but especially this year due to the higher feed prices. On average, 15% of what goes into a clamp is lost before feeding. Using an inoculant that is specifically designed to reduce waste by inhibiting yeast and mould activity will help reduce waste, leaving more forage to be fed and reduce purchased feed costs..

Magniva Platinum Wholecrop and Magniva Platinum Crimp are specially formulated to reduce waste. They utilise two categories of bacteria, a unique combination of antifungal bacteria along with an acidifying bacteria. This combination results in the production of lactic, acetic and propionic acid leading to rapid acidification during ensiling, as well as the stabilisation of the silage during feeding.

Adding the incorrect silage inoculant to wholecrop can potentially lead to challenges during feed out. This is because some yeasts use lactic acid as a nutrient source, meaning if the silage contains a lot of lactic acid, but small amounts of antifungal fermentation acids, the silage may heat more rapidly.

Choosing an inoculant specially formulated for crimp or wholecrop will ensure you have more to feed this winter.

**For more information, speak to your Feed Specialist.**

## NEW FEED SPECIALIST IN YORKSHIRE

We are delighted to welcome Kate Netherwood to the Massey Feeds team

Yorkshire lass born and bred, Kate has a BSc in Animal Science with Livestock Honours from Newcastle University, after which she worked for the University running commercial pig trials at Cockle Park.

She then joined HST Feeds as a sales rep covering Lancashire, before moving to BOCM and latterly ForFarmers. She moved back over the hill to Yorkshire when she had children, and will be covering West, North and South Yorkshire as Sales Specialist for Massey's.

Outside of work, she has two young children, and is also the Rally Officer for the Yorkshire Land Rover Owners Club, helping to organise and run off road motorsport events around the county.

Kate can be contacted on 07810 052108



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

We are delighted to be back on the shows circuit again and looking forward to seeing you at events throughout the rest of the year. Make sure to pop in and see us!

Event	Date	Location
Great Eccleston Show	16-17 July	Great Eccleston, Preston PR3 0XP
NSA Sheep Event	27 July	Three Counties Showground, Malvern WR13 6NW
Nantwich Show	27 July	Reaseheath College, Nantwich, CW5 6DF
Garstang Show	6 August	Wyre Ln, Garstang, Preston PR3 1JS
Denbigh & Flint Show	18 August	The Green, Denbigh, LL16 4UB
Westmorland County Show	7-8 Sept	Lane Farm, Crooklands. Milnthorpe. LA7 7NH
UK Dairy Day	14 Sept	International Centre, Telford, Shropshire, TF3 4JH



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