



MARCH, THE MONTH OF MANY WEATHERS!

Despite Covid-19 restrictions, our Ruminant Support team have been walking grass and based on the current weather our advice is to take the opportunities to graze when conditions allow. A wet February has led to difficult grazing conditions and an increased reliance on silage. With low levels of grass utilised, it is critical you have enough silage for the remaining housing period. It is important to avoid making rash decisions that will have long term consequences on animal performance and for dairy cows, we must protect milk solids and subsequent fertility, leading up to the breeding season. Let's hope that March does not live up to the name of a month of many weathers and that a more settled period lies ahead.

TOP TIPS TO MAINTAINING BODY CONDITION:

FRESHLY CALVED COWS

- Offer good quality forage indoors
- Build up concentrates gradually
- Introduce new feeds slowly Eg. beet, maize silage
- For difficult calvings, twin births or cows prone to milk fever, keep cows on a straw bed and offer Reviva at calving

EARLY LACTATION

- Achieve adequate dry matter (DM) intake to minimise body condition loss
- Increase grass allocations gradually and keep the diet consistent
- Balance protein in total diet to 16% when no grass is available
- Feed concentrates according to yield, silage quality and grass supply

BODY CONDITION IS KEY TO GOOD FERTILITY

The key to good fertility in dairy herds is to minimise the loss of body condition in the first six weeks of lactation. The aim is to optimise milk yield and milk solids from grass, while understanding that grass alone cannot supply sufficient energy in early lactation. Good quality silage is very important to maintain energy and dry matter (DM) intake. Concentrate feed levels should remain flexible and will depend on silage quality, grazing conditions, grass availability, cow body condition and milking ability.

RECOMMENDED CONCENTRATE SUPPLEMENTATION DEPENDING ON FORAGE TYPE AND SUPPLY

Forage Available	Parlour Feed Required	Milk Yield		
		22 Litres	26 Litres	30 Litres
Indoors fulltime on 70% DMD Silage with no or limited grazing	Milkwell 18% Milk Max 18%	6.5kg	7.5kg	8.5kg
Grass by day (6kg DM) with Adlib silage by night	PIP Spring 16% Ultra Dairy 16%	5.0kg	6.0kg	7.0kg

The table above gives an approximate guideline, for detailed recommendations contact your local Ruminant Support Specialist.

TOP TIPS FROM OUR TEAM

Laois man, Pat Delaney is a valuable member of our Technical Sales Team since 2015. From a drystock farm in Cullahill, Pat's areas of expertise include intensive beef feeding, calf care and he is passionate about improving dairy farm profitability through better grassland management and dairy nutrition. Pat is a familiar face to his customers in Laois and North Tipperary and before Covid-19 had been on farms every day advising on all aspects of livestock production and grassland management.



Pat's motto for all his livestock customers is that '**Consistency is Key**'. Whether it is calf rearing, dairy cows, beef cattle or sheep this is very important when the spring workload peaks. Based on the experience of a wet February in 2020, Pat urges dairy farmers to be realistic when estimating grass DM and be careful not to over predict the DM intake of grass. Weather and grazing conditions must be taken into consideration.

Even though our Technical Team cannot call in the normal way, they are available via telephone for technical advice and a farm visit can be arranged if required.



DEGRATION FARMS - CHANGE TO FEED PROTEIN FROM 1ST APRIL

From April 1st 2021, revised derogation requirements to reduce protein in concentrate feeds to a maximum of 15% come into effect. This applies to livestock older than 2 years of age, on a full grass diet. Feeds for youngstock and calves are excluded from the 15% protein limit. If there are other forages in the diet such as maize or grass silage, the diet will need to be reviewed and balanced for protein. In our upcoming April newsletter, we will discuss dairy feed options for the main grazing period.

MARCH SPECIAL OFFERS

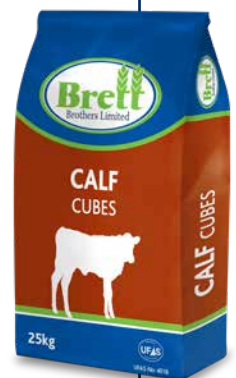
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