



Fodder Matters

Given the dry spell since early August, there has been a massive impact on grass growth and grass covers on livestock farms. Unfortunately, this has meant many farms are now eating into valuable silage reserves so it's important to be realistic about the coming winter. Silage quality is fundamental to understanding what type of feed to supplement for the winter period.

Grass had relatively poor access to Nitrogen due to difficult soil and weather conditions, as a result the level of crude protein was low throughout the grazing season. This had knock-on effects on animal growth rate and the quality of silage. Silage is extremely variable this year and in particular dry matter, protein and DMD%. A silage test is a small investment and gives accurate information to put a feeding plan in place.



Autumn Arrives



It's hard to believe that Autumn is upon us when it feels like we had very little summer weather with good grass growing conditions. Thankfully, the harvest is complete apart from our native protein crop of beans. The grain quality this year is excellent despite disappointing yields of some crops. The quantity and quality of straw saved is a good news story and has provided a welcome boost for tillage and livestock farmers.

Here's what we advise

- Test your silage early
- Silage targeted for dry cows should be tested for minerals
- Undertake a Fodder Budget
- Measure pits and count bales and summarise all livestock
- Be realistic about the length of the winter and allow buffer stocks for supplementing grass shortages
- Talk to your Bretts Technical Sales Representative when planning your budget

Options for dealing with a silage deficit

- With tight stocks of silage and reduced opportunities to get bales it is likely that you will be unable to source good quality silage in the locality but if possible, purchase any silage available
- Increase levels of meal feeding to milking cows in the parlour, start feeding weanlings at grass and increase feed levels to finishing cattle to reduce silage usage
- For weanlings use the highest quality silage available and supplement with an 18% crude protein concentrate (Heifer Rearer or 18% Weanling Cubes)
- Source additional straw that could be used for feeding to stretch silage stocks
- For Dairy Cows or Intensive Beef Finishing look at sourcing alternatives such as Maize Silage or Fodder Beet
- Start using Bretts Fodder Stretcher Ration 15% which is carefully formulated and has a proven track record in partially replacing silage/grass
- Reduce the demand for silage by selling some stock e.g. cull cows, surplus replacement weanlings, high cell count or lame dairy cows



Bretts Fodder Stretcher Ration

Bretts Fodder Stretcher Ration is formulated to include specific raw materials that will help to fill the gap of a portion of fodder (grass/silage) and stretch the supplies that are in your yard. It is suitable for dry cows, milking cows, in-calf heifers and weanlings over six months of age.

Fodder Stretcher Ration is available at a very competitive price. For further advice, please contact your Bretts Sales Representative. Every 10 tons of Fodder Stretcher Ration used on a farm will save approximately 45 bales of silage (at 190 kgs DM per bale) or 35 tons of pit silage at 25% dry matter.

Autumn Dairy Cubes 16%

From October 1st, there is no restriction on the level of protein that can be fed to dairy cows. With silage making up a proportion of the diet on many farms, it may be prudent to increase the level of protein fed in the parlour. Autumn Dairy 16% Cubes are available to order from October 1st.

The milk urea levels are an indicator of protein status in the herd and it is useful in making a decision about what dairy cube to feed in the parlour. Every farm differs so it's important to discuss with your Technical Sales Representative or Ruminant Support Specialist who will help advise you on what to feed.



Farewell To Richie



Richie Crowley pictured with colleagues Michael Foley, Sean Hogan, Jimmy Brett and Sean Brett

On Friday, August 30th, our very valued truck driver, Richie Crowley retired after 25 years of loyal service. Prior to joining Bretts, Richie had been working for Flahavans in Kilmacthomas when Brett's purchased their Animal Feed business - and Richie came to Bretts for a trial run! An early riser, Richie was always in the lorry before the sun was up and had many a load delivered before morning milking. Richie is a true gentleman: diligent, conscientious, a great team player, dependable, a careful driver, customer-focused, and a great ambassador for Bretts who always did his job with a cheerful demeanour. We know that our customers miss Richie for his professional manner, just as we are. We wish Richie a long and healthy retirement to enjoy with his wife Siobhan and their family.

Feeding Cattle This Winter



Following a delayed release from housing and a difficult grazing season, animals are back on live weight entering housing for the coming winter. Weanlings are typically back 10-20 kg of body weight on the previous two seasons, while store cattle are short 20-50 kg of liveweight. This will impact the duration of your finishing period, realised carcass weight and conformation.

For cattle that are far behind on weight, begin feeding at grass before housing to minimise the growth check at housing, and maintain performance in difficult grazing conditions. To realise typical carcass weights these lighter animals will require an additional growth period at housing before pushing up the feeding levels to finishing diets. The feed type and concentrate feeding level are important to consider when differentiating between finishing and growing type diets (See Table).

Silage Quality	64 DMD	68 DMD	72+ DMD
Heifers + Steers Finish	8.0+ kg	6.5-7.0kg	5.0 - 6.0 kg
Heifers + Steers Growth	6.0 kg	5.0 kg	4.0 kg
Bulls	Ad Libitum	Ad Libitum	8.0 kg
Weanlings	2.5 -3.0 kg	2.0 kg	1 kg-1.5kg