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Maximising forage utilisation (or using grass better as it should be referred to) can be an easy win on farm, especially when it comes to grazing...

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YOUR NEWSLETTER FROM CREDITON MILLING COMPANY

Developments in Dairy Nutrition – Has anything changed in sixty years?

The short answer (for those of you that know me well, I am not that good at providing short answers!) is yes – A LOT!



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DAIRY

I have to confess that I wasn't even a twinkle in my mum and dad's eyes sixty years ago but I think that it is fair to say there have been considerable advances in dairy nutrition throughout the last sixty years (thankfully) and mostly born out of research and development which you have all then had to interpret in order to practically implement on farm.

There are two key areas which have helped define the advances in dairy cow productivity over the last 60 years, contributing to increases in yield and productivity which, to many, were previously unimaginable.

The first is the advances made in genetics. Better indices, more rigorous selection and the introduction of

techniques such as semen sorting, embryo transfer and genomics have all helped farmers breed for potentially more productive cows.



The second has been the evolution of more effective dairy nutrition models which have helped us to feed cows with increasing precision to allow them to realise their genetic potential. Early rationing of dairy cows in the UK was carried out using Hay Equivalents (HE) (circa 1965) which was then superseded by a much better (although arguably still questionable!) Starch Equivalents (SE) in the 1970's. Once everyone seemed to have got their heads around this, the Metabolisable Energy (ME) system was introduced in the 1970s and still largely underpins our current feeding approaches.

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DAIRY

POULTRY

BEEF & SHEEP

FORAGE

Developments in Dairy Nutrition – Has anything changed in sixty years? *continued from page 1*

Since then, we have seen incremental developments in both energy and protein feeding systems. Together, these have improved the way cows are fed, based on better understanding of animal requirements and the performance of the digestive system. The Feed into Milk (FiM) system (which was a significant development and part of an industry collaborative project) is already over 20 years old and a large number of the trials used sheep as their animal model; metabolic requirements for sheep and dairy cows are very different.

NutriOpt (developed by Trouw Nutrition) provided new thinking for dairy cow rationing in 2018. The model itself comprises three key elements:

A rumen model which considers the balance of carbohydrate and protein fermentation, including rate and extent. New parameters are able to more accurately predict the effect of ingredients on rumen health.

A cow model which predicts the end products of digestion which are then utilised by the cow.

A dynamic rationing model which can more accurately build effective rations as it is based on what happens in the cow.

To summarise, the *NutriOpt* dairy model is based on a better understanding of what is in a feed, how it is degraded in the rumen and the nutritional value the feed provides to the animal. This places a greater focus on rumen stability and general animal health.

Fundamental to the success of any rationing programme is accurate forage analysis. Forage comprises a large proportion of dairy cow diets and given the changeable weather we have been experiencing we are anticipating seeing some variable first cut analysis. So please do request frequent forage analysis to help us better predict

how that forage is likely to behave in your cows!

Although you could say that I am little biased, R&D is fundamental to the progress of our industry and it is vital that we continue to utilise the latest knowledge and developments in order to drive efficiency and profitability of our farming enterprises. After all, that is what we are all working so hard to achieve, isn't it?

For further information, or to discuss feeding options for your farm, please contact your Feed Specialist or call the office on 01363 772212.



CMC at 60

2024 sees Crediton Milling Co Ltd celebrate its 60th anniversary. From our company's conception in 1964, the foundation for the business was to offer quality rations, higher levels of service and value for money. All of which remain key elements today.

As we reflect on the past 60 years, we thank our previous generations for the hard work that they have offered to ensure our platform is solid for the future. Although there are few family-owned intendent feed businesses left within our industry, we remain strong with our main asset being our formidable team, all of whom, we are very proud of. Today, we have a young, energetic team offering enthusiasm

and solutions to the everchanging demands that the industry throws up. We are very grateful to them for their continued commitment.

Most importantly, we would like to thank our customers for their continued support and we look forward to seeing you at a number of agricultural shows over the summer for a beer or two.



MARK GULLEY
MANAGING DIRECTOR



Summer grazing, top tips and returns

Maximising forage utilisation (or using grass better as it should be referred to) can be an easy win on farm, especially when it comes to grazing.



FORAGE

There has been a distinct movement to try and turn all producers who graze into hardcore plate meter wielding fanatics, which not everyone is. Now, if you have the inclination or interest in this area, then this is a sensible course to follow, but it's important to recognise that this really isn't everybody's cup of tea.

Making use of what we grow on farm is always a great idea and doing it better is, well.. Better.. and certainly ticks the box when it comes to talking about sustainability (We are going to refer to this as "efficiency" from now on).

The important thing to remember here is that adopting one or two of below points will mean an improvement, you don't have to go to the extremes to see a benefit.

What are the rewards

There are good returns to be had from focusing on this, as illustrated in the table below.

The benefits of using your grass better can be split into 2 key approaches:

1. Maintaining current regime but include more grazing in the diet. (e.g challenge your buffer feeding and cake allocation).
2. Include more grazing in the ration, but also incorporate a grazing management change.

Taking approach 1 we can see that average grazing has an advantage over

silage in the diet of 1.7p/litre and 8.6p/litre over concentrates. This is especially relevant when we think about later lactation animals, which we are just filling up with buffer and cake. So these should be the main target when we are thinking about this approach.

Looking at approach 2, the key with this one is that you use more of the grass that you are growing. On most livestock farms growing grass isn't usually the problem, yes reseeding does help, but utilisation of grass tends to be the limiting factor, and this is determined by how we graze it. Paddock systems tend to be the most effective at overcoming this, but again this doesn't suit everybody. So below are a few key points that will make the job more effective.

- Back fence when strip grazing to protect regrowth.
- Daily allocation of fresh grazing to stimulate interest and intakes
- Give access to this fresh grazing after pm milking when grazing behaviour is strongest and grass sugars are highest.
- Plot a grass wedge chart on a weekly basis to manage supply effectively – anticipation is the art of good management.
- Ensure cows have to walk no further than 250 metres to get to water whilst at grass.
- Offer high yielders taller grass (e.g. 6in/ 15cm, but not overstood) to

maximise intakes. If necessary tidy up the grass sward with lower production stock (or top).

- Don't try and force fresh/high producing cows to clear up leys.
- Pre-mow rather than post-top fields.

Again the benefits here are clear in the table, but the cost to produce a litre from this type of grazed grass are half (or just over) that of silage and a quarter of that from concentrate.

Pitfalls

Ironically the biggest issue I tend to see out at grass is cows not getting enough food full stop. This is because we tend to overestimate the amount of grass that we put in front of cows. Many will be budgeting on taking 12kg of DM from grazing and there just isn't the area allocated to achieve this. So it is imperative that a rough calculation is done to ensure that an adequate area has been given to the cows, especially when strip grazing.

The other downside of trying to push your milk from forage is that if you get it wrong by challenging your cows then it can have marked effects on milk qualities, outputs and fertility, so it is important to ease in to this with little steps rather than one big jump. It is also important to remember that when at grass you are asking an awful lot of your fresh cows, so supporting them is crucial, and you should have a plan of how you are going to do this whilst challenging your grass usage.

If you have any queries or questions on this topic please give me a ring, or speak to your feed advisor and they can arrange a visit.

	Average Grazing Management	Good Grazing Management	Grass Silage	Concentrate
ME	11.4	11.8	10.6	13
cost £/t DM	107	86	135	340
cost pence/kg DM	10.7	8.6	13.5	34
pence/MJ	0.94	0.73	1.25	2.62
cost/l/milk	4.9	3.8	6.6	13.7



MATT RANCE 07809 306571
FORAGE & NUTRITION SPECIALIST

Spotty Liver in hens

Typically, this used to be a summer disease, with classic signs of high mortality affecting birds at peak lay.



POULTRY

We have seen as a practice that this pattern is changing. We are now seeing a lot of cases during the winter, and they are not always associated with high mortality or large production drops. It also seems to be affecting birds of any age. When we diagnose the disease on different farms, we are also noticing that there is no obvious link between them.

This changing pattern highlights the importance of doing postmortems on any dead birds to ensure that the disease is not present.

It has also been reported in caged birds and broilers, as well so please bear this in mind if you suspect spotty liver.

Diagnosis is achieved by postmortem where characteristic lesions are visible on the liver. The liver appears to be covered in small grey-white lesions, 1-2mm in size. Further testing in labs shows that these lesions represent a multifocal hepatic necrosis. These areas of the liver that are irreversibly damaged.

Some of the risk factors identified by the research include the following:

1. Damaged gut by worms or cocci, link via the portal vein (vein leading from gut to the liver itself)
2. Excess surface water close to the house leading to faecal oral spread.
3. Mycotoxins in feed. (Inclusion of a binder may be useful)
4. Shared grazing with ruminants.
5. Possible earth worm involvement, they have potential to act as transport hosts to the Campylobacter.
6. Higher than average ambient temperatures.

The bacteria Campylobacter is a bacteria which commonly affects the gut. A novel Campylobacter has been identified as a cause of spotty liver. The bacteria is thought to spread between the birds via faeces which other birds then ingest.

As you can see from the risk factors, maintaining good gut health is an

essential tool to prevent the infection. As ever, excellent biosecurity is a must as well as keeping the birds environment as clean and dry as possible. We have also found that the inclusion of products that promote gut health via the feed or water can help prevent or aid recovery from Spotty Liver infection.

Treatment for spotty liver does help reduce mortality and regain egg production in our experience.

If you have a flock affected by spotty liver, please ensure you maintain strict biosecurity between any other flocks. If possible, avoid visiting your youngest birds if you have another flock affected, to avoid the risk of spread.

Royal Cornwall Show 2024

Once again show season is here, marking the start of summer and the chance to catch up with friends old and new. Our new spot at the RCS last year was well received, the weather was kind and it was great seeing so many familiar faces.

This year we are experimenting once again to ensure that we provide you with the best possible service at the shows we will be introducing hospitality wristbands, these will either be delivered to you before the show by a member of the CMC team, OR will be available on the day at the stand.

We look forward to seeing you and celebrating our 60th year together.

