

## Planning grazing and winter fodder for dairy cows.

### **Concentrate until the end of August on:**

- Growing as much grass as possible.
- Using it as efficiently as possible.
- Planning stock numbers to carry through next winter.

Plan ahead, complete a feed budget and review regularly as you make silage or sell stock. Discuss options with an adviser, and take action early to keep on track and within budget.

Tick which the following pointers you can do:

### **INCREASE FODDER SUPPLY**

Sow fertiliser after each grazing.

If pH is low, consider lime application before applying further nitrogen fertiliser.

Spread slurry on silage areas rather than grazing to make best use N,P and K.

Purchase additional standing grass or wholecrop silage.

Sow a forage crop (e.g. rape or kale) on land not already producing good grass yield.


### **Keep in mind:**

Slurry spreading using trailing shoe, shallow injection or dribble bar application will deliver better nitrogen utilisation.

Ensure fertiliser application closely matches the nutrient requirement of the crop, especially P and K for silage crops.

Silage swards earmarked for reseeding this year should be cut twice prior to cultivation.

### **USE FODDER MORE EFFICIENTLY**

Graze tightly, targeting post grazing grass cover of 1,800kg DM/ha.

Mow heavy grass covers, above 3,000kgDM/ha, in front of cows to improve utilisation.

Use a leader/follower system with in-calf heifers or dry cows following behind the milking cows.

Take out paddocks with grass covers above 3500kgDM/ha for silage or big bales.

Cut grass for silage at the right stage and cut as soon as possible.

Feed the best quality forage available on the farm to the most productive stock.


### **Keep in mind:**

Take action early.

Two or three medium cuts will be more cost effective overall than a large single cut.

Big bales offer more flexibility for cutting smaller areas and for feeding out if grazing conditions become difficult.

**REDUCE FODDER DEMAND**

*Prioritise the stock to be sold.*

- Cull lower yielding dairy cows (below 15 litres per cow), scanned not in calf.
- Consider for sale cows producing milk with high cell count or low compositional quality.
- Sell store or beef cattle at the correct stage.

*Look carefully at replacement policy:*

- Sell surplus heifers as potential breeding stock to other farmers
- Consider contract rearing of replacement heifers
- Calve heifers at 2 years old. Do not carry passengers.

**ANIMAL HEALTH**

- Keep up to date with worm and fluke treatments.
- Discuss with your vet the need for vaccination against clostridial diseases where there is an associated risk from fluke.
- Consider vaccinating young calves against pneumonia pre housing.
- Ensure good ventilation in cow accommodation if cows are housed.

**BUSINESS AND FINANCE**

- Look carefully at relative costs and what is value for money.
- Look carefully at cashflow and forecast ahead for 4 to 6 months.
- Discuss any potential problems as soon as possible with your lenders.
- Benchmark your dairy herd and keep a monthly check on yields and meal inputs.

Contact your local Dairy Development Adviser for more information.

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