

## Butterpro - a very different cake

**All the talk may be of Prince Harry and Megan Markel's wedding cake, but we have got a very special cake of our own which will help customers to maintain milk quality, and therefore margin, over the grazing season as part of our Milk Quality Blueprint.**

The FiMLAC Butterpro range of dairy compounds has been carefully developed to help cows produce high quality milk all summer, combining all the well-known benefits of the FiMLAC range with several extra features.

Three of the most important things in maintaining milk quality at grass are rumen pH, fibre levels and Rumen Unsaturated Fatty Acid Load (RUFAL).

Grazed grass contains very little structural fibre and a lot of rapidly fermentable carbohydrates, which together can lead to a reduction in rumen pH and an increased risk of sub-acute rumen acidosis. To help maintain rumen pH, FiMLAC Butterpro uses a new product, MAG12 as its magnesium source. MAG12 is 98% soluble and highly bioavailable to the cow, but also has a buffering effect on the rumen, helping to keep it at the optimum pH.

### Balanced energy sources

To further improve rumen function, all products in the FiMLAC Butterpro range are high in fibre with a crude fibre of 14%. This brings some slower fermenting carbohydrates to the party, which reduce the rate of passage through the rumen, allowing the cow to get more out of the grass. It is also worth mentioning that we

have a coarse grist, meaning the particle size in the FiMLAC Butterpro is larger with a smaller surface area which ferments slower than compounds with smaller particles.

Grass, contrary to what some may believe, is not a complete feed and it needs to be balanced correctly, just like a winter diet. This is particularly true with fats. RUFAL is a new term which describes the amount of unsaturated fatty acids in the rumen. If there are too many they can cause milk fat depression. Some of the RUFAL will come from grazing, but a significant proportion can come from compounds.

Amazingly last summer we saw oil levels of 7% in some competitor cakes which will seriously increase the RUFAL and put the rumen under pressure, resulting in lower butterfat percent. FiMLAC Butterpro has less than 4.5% oil.

### Improve protein utilisation

Protein levels at grass are always a concern so Butterpro is a reverse ratio protein feed. This means it has the best balance of usable protein to be fed alongside grazing and grass silage. We accomplish this by careful raw materials selection and by including Novatan which slows down the degradation of protein in the rumen, vital when cows are grazing.

Novatan also increases the number of microbes in the rumen to mop up excess ammonia from the rapidly fermentable protein in grass. Excess ammonia is present because the protein is degraded by some rumen microbes to ammonia which is then used by

other rumen microbes as a nitrogen source to make more protein. These microbes are then the main protein supply for the cow.

Minerals play a key role and the FiMLAC minerals contain trace elements in the most bioavailable form.

### Mineral analysis

Our Milk Quality Blueprint involves two farm visits. The first visit is an information gathering exercise. Forage and water samples will be taken for nutritional and mineral analysis. Why a mineral analysis? Another part of the puzzle with grazing is the metabolic base ratio (MBR) of the cow. This has been shown to affect milk yield and butterfat.

The MBR is determined by the balance of these minerals so we need an accurate picture before we can balance diets. For good milk quality we must aim for a potassium:sodium ratio of 5:1.

A cow's MBR is especially important in times of heat stress as it will determine her blood pH, small fluctuations in which will put cows off their feed and affect production.

The second visit will feed back information to you and a plan can be formulated to help you optimise milk constituents within your contract cost-effectively to help maintain margins.

**For more information talk to your feed specialist.**



# Farming thoughts

Hopefully spring is on its way. The snow played havoc with milk collections and feed deliveries and we would like to thank everyone who helped keep the mill going over this period.

We are justifiably very proud of our merchant stockist network here in the west country and we now have over 19 fully equipped stores stocking Harpers Feeds, meaning all our customers have had access to feed during the difficult weather.

With many of our competitors running out of feed, coupled with the demise of the 'nationwide' store, we are focused more than ever on providing excellent value and service. Our aim is to keep you supplied with quality feed at all times.

Harpers Feeds is going from strength to strength, with March 2018 being a record month of feed sales.

We are always looking for ways to streamline and become more efficient. Three new blend bins have been commissioned since Christmas, meaning one man can produce up to 150 tonnes of finished blend in an 8 hour shift. Two additional raw material bins and two new lorries will appear before next winter.

We held two very successful dairy seminars in February, launching our new Butterpro range. With more emphasis on milk quality going forward, have you had one of our feed specialists carry out your Milk Quality Blueprint?



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## Grains and straights update

The focus over the past few months has been the developing drought in Argentina, which has affected growing soya bean crops. Last year Argentina produced 57.8 million tonnes, this year it is likely to be around 40 million.

This has driven prices up by approximately £70/t. We are not likely to see any let up in prices until late summer, and it is difficult to see how prices will come back to £300/t in the near future.

Distillers' products are particularly difficult at present. European supplies have been delayed and the only running ethanol plant in the UK is having production problems. Ensus normally produce 1200t/day of wheat distillers, but is currently producing 300t/day which has pushed prices higher. Vivergo, the ethanol plant that shut in November is starting to produce again but have already sold out.

Rape prices have also been pushed higher on the back of the rest of the protein complex. Some crushing plants in Europe have now switched from rape to soya due to better margins.

All fibre products remain expensive for the summer with sugar beet around £200/t. Soya hulls look the best alternative but are only at approximately £20/t discount to sugar beet. Barley is in short supply and is now trading at a premium to wheat. Cereals look likely to remain in short supply for the rest of the season. Fortunately, we are uncompetitive for exports so this should keep the UK balance sheet in a better position. Going forward it is difficult to see how prices can ease further on new crop. Planted areas of winter wheat and barley are down, spring crops will be late going in and we are likely to only have a small old crop carryout. New crop wheat is trading around £135/t ex-combine with barley at a £12/t discount.



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## Reducing antibiotics in game birds

The drive to reduce the use of antibiotics in agriculture has seen targets set for all classes of animals. The target set for the game industry to reduce usage by 80% by 2020 is a challenging one. Good progress was made last year with a 30% reduction in what was a difficult season from June onwards. Like all targets, it will become more difficult the closer we get.

We are refining our County Game Feed range to help our customers meet this challenge. This year we are running some trials in conjunction with St David's Vets; looking at rations to help poult grow stronger, healthier and stress-free, while reducing the need for medicated feed. The ABC (Applied Bacterial Control) range has reduced protein levels, increased fibre and incorporates essential oils and other gut conditioners to improve overall gut health and reduce stress.



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However, this is only one piece of the jigsaw. St David's are also advising on housing and release-pen management. Overall cost savings on antibiotics will give customers more freedom to spend on other improvements targeting bird health.

The trials being conducted with some of our larger customers, will be monitored closely and the results shared. Myles Jones, who is currently on a degree course at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, will join St David's in June for two months to collect all the data. He then joins the Harper's sales team in January 2019.

We hope to have positive information to feed back by the Autumn, so watch this space.

## Three steps for better quality silage

Actions taken over the next six weeks will have a significant effect on the quality of silage made and prospects for next winter. So here are three tips to improve quality

### Step 1 - Pre-cut test grass

To ferment effectively, grass needs good levels of available sugar, the feed that fuels fermentation. It also needs low free nitrates as high levels will reduce the effectiveness of fermentation. Take grass samples regularly and look for sugar content of at least 3% in the freshweight (10%DM) and free nitrates of less than 1000mg/kg freshweight. Free nitrates may be an issue this year with late fertiliser applications following the wet winter and spring.

### Step 2 - Use an inoculant

A high quality, palatable silage will encourage high forage intakes allowing more milk from forage and encouraging better rumen health. The key to better quality silage is managing the fermentation.

The objective is to achieve a rapid fall in pH and then to ensure the forage does not spoil while in the clamp. Using a crop and condition specific inoculant, like our best-seller Biotal Axcool, helps establish the high populations of the bacteria which drive the required lactic fermentation and ensure the rapid and complete fermentation.

Use inoculants correctly and don't cut corners. As they are formulated to deliver the required numbers of bacteria, they should be used at the stated rate.

It may be tempting to reduce cost by applying a lower rate but all this will do is slow down the fermentation so always apply the full rate.

### Step 3 - Keep oxygen out

You need to eliminate oxygen from the clamp as it spoils silage at both clamping and feed out. While the silage is initially fermenting, oxygen allows the crop to continue to respire, leading to sugar being converted into carbon dioxide and water, resulting in higher dry matter losses. At feed out the issue is aerobic deterioration which encourages the growth of yeasts which use sugars and so reduce available energy. There can also be an increase in moulds which increase the risk of mycotoxins.

The way to help reduce both issues is effective sheeting to prevent oxygen getting into the clamp. Silostop is the only proven oxygen barrier film on the market. While other films can restrict the flow of oxygen they do not stop it. Silostop is 100 times more effective as an oxygen barrier than regular film. While with regular films you can expect a 20% DM loss, Silostop can reduce this to under 8%.

Following these three steps can help ensure you look forward to next winter with more, better quality silage in the clamp.

For more information call the office or talk to your feed specialist.



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## It will soon be time to turn out

Having struggled through the recent snow and ice, it is difficult to think that turnout is just around the corner. Nonetheless cattle will go out to graze in April and we must be ready to manage grass growth and stocking rates to ensure the best performance from grazing.

The first big decision to make is which stock to turn out and what to leave in to finish. In general, if they can be finished with an extra 100kg live weight gain or two months feeding it is better to keep them in. If you are going to turn cattle out to finish through the summer think about how you can rotate grazing with at least three blocks. Make a worming plan to control parasites and weigh them before they go out so that you know what they have achieved by mid-summer.

My information is that finished cattle prices will firm through spring and early summer so if you have got silage or haylage there is every chance of cattle returning well in May and June. Check that your growth rates are right by weighing again and refine the ration if you are not getting 1.5 kgs/head/day. If you are going to run out of cereals, speak to us about alternative ways to provide the best ration available.

Fluke is still a problem, we are still seeing increased resistance to triclabendazole based flukicides. Fluking with a different active ingredient could make a considerable difference to performance.

For more information on the options, speak to Dan Miles, at Harpers Farm Supplies.



**Bill Harper**  
Director  
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## Providing your fertiliser needs

The fertiliser spreaders will soon be working flat out. We can supply fertiliser direct to farm from a range of the country's leading manufacturers.



Origin fertilisers are a national manufacturer and distributor of fertiliser with a strong local presence throughout the country. Products include spring and autumn grades nitrogen and straight fertilisers. We can also provide their innovative Seleni range.

Seleni-Start and Seleni-Grass are grassland fertilisers enriched with granular selenium specifically formulated to raise levels in grazing and forage to improve livestock health. Sweet-Grass is a high nitrogen fertiliser specifically designed to increase sward palatability to maximise intakes, increasing milk and meat production from grass for increased returns.



CF fertilisers are suppliers of compounds, nitrogen sulphur and nitram.



Yara fertilisers include nitrogen, compounds and straights.

We can also source urea at competitive prices and offer a soil testing service to establish your fertiliser requirements. We can then provide tailored recommendations from one of our FACTS qualified advisors.

For more information call the office or talk to your feed specialist.



# Time to finalise maize choice

**Selecting the right maize variety will significantly influence the amount of high quality feed you will produce.**

Once again we are stocking some exciting and proven varieties from LG Seeds which combine excellent dry matter yields and starch content with exceptional cell wall digestibility to produce a high energy forage, and plenty of it.

Reason and Ambition are well-established firm favourites with our customers while Pinnacle is an exciting new variety which has been receiving some excellent reviews.

Probably the most important decision when choosing varieties is to make sure that they will mature in good time to allow an early harvest in good conditions, ensuring a successor crop can be established and that silage can be included in diets sooner rather than later. We can all remember the problems with 2012 when many later maturing varieties in particular failed to deliver.

The key to maturity is Ontario Heat Units (OHU) and a new online tool from LG Seeds lets you see the 10 year average OHU for your postcode, meaning you can select varieties most likely to mature on time in your location. So visit <https://www.lgseeds.co.uk/heat-map/> and see which of the varieties we stock are best suited to your farm.



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## A summer of charity activity

It is going to be a busy summer raising money for charity.

Paul Cholwill, Feed Specialist and his wife Stacey Hillier Cholwill, one of our Customer Services Administrators, are walking around the Isle of Wight to raise money for Cancer Research and the British Heart Foundation.

Tina Collins, Finance, Office and HR Manager is running the London Marathon in aid of Dementia UK and Talan's Trust



In June we will be delighted to welcome the **GAFT Charity Bike Ride**, an activity organized by the Grain and Feed Trade which is raising money for

FCN, the charity which supports farmers and families within the farming community through difficult times.

The ride involves visiting over 170 feed and grain sites and will cover over 3500 miles.

Donations can be sent to FREEPOST Harpers Feeds. Please make cheques payable to Harpers Feeds and write which charity/event you want to support on the reverse.

## Dates for your Diary

<b>Saturday 7th April</b>	Okehampton v Bideford Rugby	Okehampton RFC, 3pm KO
<b>Saturday 14th April</b>	Exeter Leukemia Fund Charity Concert	Holsworthy Memorial Hall
<b>Tuesday 24th April</b>	Cornwall Grassland County Field Day	Hele Barton Farm, Week St Mary, 10am
<b>4th May &amp; 5th May</b>	Dorset Horn and Poll Dorset May Fair	Exeter Market
<b>17th, 18th, 19th May</b>	Devon County Show 2018	Westpoint, Clyst St Mary, Exeter, EX5 1DJ
<b>Friday 25th May</b>	Bude Town Band Charity Concert	Penstowe Manor, Bude



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