



## Making best use of forage stocks



### **Faced with some significant challenges, the sooner you start planning for the winter, the better you will be placed.**

We have been extremely active working with customers to extend rations and address these shortages in several ways. The first part of this process is to carry out a complete forage audit so you know exactly what you are working with. Remember to include all forages - big bales, hay and straw and weigh some of the bales rather than guessing at the weight. Get all silage clamps analysed too so you know both quality and quantity. We will be able to help you with this.

Once the audit is complete we will be able to formulate rations with an exact allocation of forage. If you know what you have in stock, how many animals you will be feeding and for how long, you can plan for the winter.

### **Do you need to keep your animals?**

The need to identify poor performing individuals has never been so important. In any herd there are passenger cows. They may be barreners; high cell count cows; cows that need multiple services or persistently lame cows. They will all fail to milk to their potential, generating a lower income over feed costs than their herd mates. All of these are associated with higher veterinary and treatment costs.

Take the time to critically review the cows in the herd now, before they move onto full winter diets and decide whether they should be kept over the winter. A few less cows will also reduce pressure on feed troughs, water troughs and cubicle space which could improve performance from the remaining cows.

### **How much to feed?**

In forage Dry Matter terms, aim for 11-12kgDM for milking cows and 10kgDM for dry cows with up to 7kg of this coming from straw. For young stock work on an average of 6kgDM again trying to incorporate a high proportion of straw and hay where possible.

Where forage is tight we need to look at alternatives. In response to customer requests we have formulated a 'forage extender mix' which has been successfully used on several units, being mixed with either water or whey to create a moist feed. On other units this blend has been fed as a midday feed and this is working equally well.

### **Who to feed it to?**

Try where possible to reserve the best of the first and second cut grass silages for the freshest milking cows or youngest bullocks. Use confirmed pregnancy as the point at which you either move groups or challenge feed dairy cows. Wean bullocks and lambs quickly and aim to sell early, avoiding longer, drawn-out, slower growth with lower efficiency.

Allocate lower ME silages, wholecrop, big bales, hay and straw to lower yielding dairy cows, dry cows, heifers and youngstock who are generating less income or just require growth. Look at alternative methods of feeding. High protein molasses blends fed with hay and straw will form the base of diets for rearing youngstock with either mineral buckets or boluses. Advice on mineral requirements can be provided by your Harpers Feed Specialist or from Harpers Farm Supplies where we stock a comprehensive range of supplements to suit any system.

### **Stretching it out**

Weather permitting, look to make the extra cut of silage. Maize crops are now coming off the fields giving the opportunity to reseed immediately with grass or rye to allow for either a late cut or very early cut/early bite next year before being ploughed back for cereals or maize. On some units swards have been improved with direct drilling and slot seeding increasing sward density and crop yield.

To carry out a feed audit and develop a winter-feeding plan talk to your Feed Specialist or call the office on Tel 01409 254 300.



**Richard Waters**  
Ruminant Feed Specialist  
07467 955 130

# Farming thoughts

## Brexit

I have just returned from a study tour from Ireland, visiting farms in northern and southern Ireland and to the National Ploughing Championships in the South. The northern farmers were quite happy with the possibility of no hard border with the south.

The southern farmers however are desperate for a Brexit trade deal as 40% of all Irish agricultural products end up in the UK.

90% of Irish dairy products are exported and 60% of Irish cheddar is exported to the UK.

In the beef sectors, 50% of Irish beef, (250,000 tonnes) ends up in the UK each year.

I think we can all agree that an agreed deal is needed as soon as possible so we can all plan for the future.

## Prices

It was encouraging to hear that Arla will be increasing their prices by 1.09p/litres as of 1st October. Let's hope that the other big processors will follow their lead!

Whatever your contract, maintaining milk quality and getting fresh calved high yielders off to a good start will be crucial. Talk to your Feed Specialist about our new Novasmart farm pack which will give these cows a boost.

Looking at the current raw material prices; it's a no brainer to use soya as your main protein source being the most cost effective compared to other raw materials.

We are contracting fixed formulation feed until the end of December 2018, please speak to your Feed Specialist if you haven't already done so. We will shortly be offering prices until April 2019 so keep an eye out.



**Glen Johns**  
Sales Director  
07831 725 779

harpers@harpersfeeds.co.uk

## Grain and Straights

**Major news over the past month has been the closure of the Vivergo ethanol plant in Hull. The plant produces 420 million litres of bioethanol and 500,000 tonnes of animal feed annually, including wheat distillers and moist feeds.**

On the day this news happened, wheat dropped by £5/t but quickly recovered. While the closure of the plant will put the UK balance of wheat in a better position, barley still remains in short supply with wheat and barley trading at parity. Farmers are reluctant sellers after seeing some grain at the highs, seeming comfortable to wait for the market to rise.

The September USDA report increased global wheat production by 3.37 million tonnes to 733 million tonnes. Australia's wheat harvest is predicted to be at an 11 year low of 19.1 million tonnes, due to their drought. Going forward it is difficult to see how cereals can rally to the highs of £200/t again.



**Andrew Davies**  
Operations Director  
01409 254 300



The news of Vivergo shutting has put massive pressure on distillers products. Wheat distillers have become very difficult, with no offers.

This has put pressure on other proteins such as rape and maize distillers. The major saving grace is that soya prices remain under pressure as a record US crop is being harvested. Analysts suggest that the US soya could yield a record 127 million tonne crop. The price of soya beans in dollar terms is the lowest it has been since December 2008 and soya meal the lowest since August 2017. However, current currency levels are keeping soya in the early £300. On a cost per unit of protein soya is the most cost-effective protein source.

Fibre sources continue to remain expensive. Soya hulls remain in the early £200, with sugar beet at similar prices. With the UK sugar beet crop around 20% down and the Russian crop 17% down it is very difficult to see how prices can dramatically fall.

**If you would like to discuss any of these points, please do not hesitate to contact us.**

## New calf milk delivers the results



**Several of the team from Harpers attended a conference run by Trouw Nutrition to explain the science behind their new Energized Calf Milk powder, and how, in their words it is going to revolutionise early life nutrition.**

The science made sense to us, but we wanted to see if the figures we had been shown were achievable in practice, so we offered to do some trials of our own. Also, at the meeting was Dannielle Munday from St Boniface Vets who's husband Jack farms in partnership with his father Dave in Sandford, running 250 autumn block calving cross bred cows. They had struggled to settle on a favoured powder and had had very varied success over recent years.

The calves are left on the cows for around 6-12 hours before being moved onto the milk powder, mixed at 150g/litre. The calves are also offered ad-lib Harpers Top Calf, clean straw, and water. The Energized Calf Milk is fed at a rate of 6 litre/day for the first week, and then up to 8 litres/day until day 35, when it is scaled back to 7 litres.

Calves are weighed as close to birth as possible, and then being batched. Once batched they are weighed approximately fortnightly.

Initial results have been great with both Jack and Dave remarking on how well the calves are looking, 'with a fantastic shine'. They have struggled in the past to get calves to take any more than 6 litres of milk replacer, but Jack has said that 'on the Energizer the calves seem so much brighter, and just want more and more. And they don't get the classic scour that you get with high level feeding of other powders.'



**Jake Chisholm**  
Feed Specialist  
07823 344 222

## Time to look at earlier beef finishing



**Bill Harper**  
Director  
07831 099 182

**With more finished cattle contracts requiring younger cattle, now could be the time to look at earlier finishing, especially as on many farms while grass silage is really good there is not too much of it and straw is a bit short and expensive.**

Taking 300-400kgs cattle to slaughter weights of 600kgs is possible if you have got good growth genetics and get the diet right. Many of you will have your own cereals available, even if quantity is slightly reduced, so let's look at an ideal ration in these circumstances.

This steer diet will provide 110MJ of energy and 1500g of protein, sufficient for our target 1.4kgLWG/day.

Product	400kg Steers	350kg Heifers
Average Grass silage (25% DM) kg/day	12	12
Rolled Barley kg/day	5	4
Harpers 25% Beef Balancer + Yeast kg/day	2.5	2
Target daily gain (kgLWT/day)	1.4	1.2
Days to finish	150	150

The starch and sugar level is 31% so yeast is essential to control rumen fermentation and to ensure all the nutrients are captured. Ideally this would be fed through a mixer wagon but could be fed with ad lib silage supplemented with two feeds of barley and 25% Balancer + Yeast per day.

Our high quality 25% Balancer + Yeast diet can be produced in nuts or mix form and will provide all the necessary protein, digestible fibre, minerals and vitamins to ensure excellent rumen health and top performance, helping get the most from your cereals.

You will need to weigh monthly to ensure targets are being met.

If you work out the economics of finishing, it always pays to grow cattle as fast as possible, getting as much from your home-produced grass and cereals. The 25% Balancer + Yeast portion of the diet is the glue that holds everything together in digestion and performance terms. Cattle of this size will need around 7.5kg of bedding straw per day, costing 75p so the incentive to get cattle finished as soon as possible has never been greater.

If you are looking to early finish suckled calves of around 300 kgs at weaning, build up to the same diet over the first two months and continue at 7.5 kgs barley and 25% Balancer + Yeast for a further 150 days to reach slaughter weights.

To make sure your animals are healthy, please consult with Dan Miles from Harpers Farm Supplies for fluke and worm treatment programmes.

**For more details, let us analyse your silage and build a ration tailored for you.**

## Get lambs over the finishing line

**Sheep farmers across the region are facing up to the consequences of a monumental year weatherwise! So what can be done to get lambs through to finishing?**

The Westcountry prides itself on an ability to grow grass, but not this summer. So where has it left us? On the lamb front, in many cases the lack of grass means ewes haven't milked as well as we would have liked. Consequently, many lambs haven't grown as well as expected with the lambs not finished. So what do we suggest?

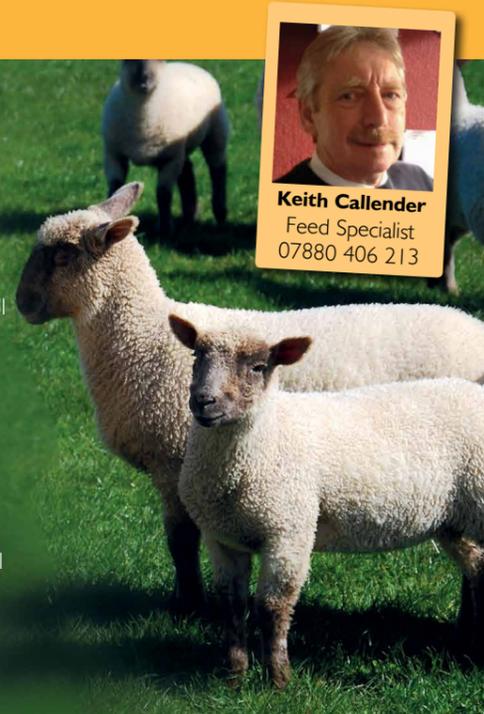
The first thing to explore before seriously finishing lambs is to check on the worm burden in the lambs. We can do a worm egg count for you at Harpers Farm Supplies which will determine the extent of the problem and allow an appropriate product to be used.

Lambs need to be finished as soon as possible to get arguably the best price but also leave any grass for breeding stock.

We would recommend Lamb Finisher Nuts because as the name suggests it will finish lambs quickly due to the balance of starch, sugars and digestible fibre energy sources along with the optimum protein content, again with the perfect balance of different protein sources. It is designed to be fed as a complete diet and contains ammonia chloride to prevent urinary calculi, which has been well proven over the years.

For anyone with cereals available for home mixing, we would recommend 20% Lamb Finisher Balancer Nuts, fed to finishing lambs mixed 50:50 with rolled/crimped wheat or barley. It can be mixed before use or alternatively layered in a trough just before feeding. Containing double minerals and ammonia chloride, it needs no further mineral supplementation.

**For more information, speak to your Feed Specialist or contact the office.**



**Keith Callender**  
Feed Specialist  
07880 406 213

## Trace elements can increase scanning percent

Maximising the number of strong lambs sold is a key performance indicator for every sheep producer. The size of the lamb crop is determined by the scanning percentage. With an average scanning percentage in the UK of just 170% suggests opportunities are being missed during the very early stages of pregnancy leading to financial losses.

Nutrition has a significant influence at tupping time. Often grazing alone is insufficient to meet requirements, particularly as it naturally declines in nutritional value around the time rams are introduced. It is important to plan supplementation at the time when the foundations are being laid for next year's lamb crop.

The key objectives at tupping are:

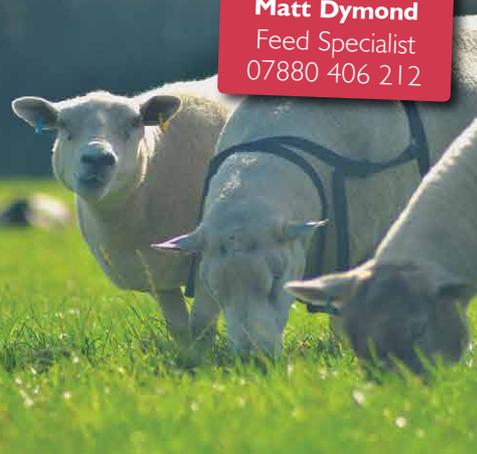
- Achieving target ewe body condition score
- Optimising conception rates
- Achieving 75% of ewes holding to first service
- Ensuring less than 2% empty rate

Trace elements play a crucial role in increasing conception rates but are typically low in grazing. Supplementing ewes with cobalt, selenium and zinc in the pre- and immediate post-tupping periods will lead to increased ovulation rates and improved embryo implantation. Together these will result in more ewes holding to first service, more twins, a tighter lambing period and easier ewe management. Trace elements are easily supplied by mineral buckets or by using a bolus so can fit into any system.

Speak to your Feed Specialist or Harpers Farm Supplies about our range of mineral buckets and boluses and how they will help maximise next year's lamb crop.



**Matt Dymond**  
Feed Specialist  
07880 406 212



## Plan now for Spring fertiliser

In spite of a challenging grazing season, customers who used Harpers Sweet-Grass fertiliser saw better growth, increased dry matter intakes (DMI) and tighter grazing residuals.

Sweet-Grass combines Nitrogen and Sulphur to promote grass growth and quality, while the inclusion of sodium enhances palatability. Trials at Bangor University showed a 18.6% increase in DMI as a result of applying Sodium with fertiliser.

With tight winter forage stocks, many farmers will be hoping for an early spring so they can turn out sooner. Now is the time to think about your fertiliser needs so you can secure a good deal.

Fertiliser prices have been firming for two main reasons. Firstly, an increase in raw material cost as well as the weakening of the pound against the Euro and dollar, which is compounding the price rise.

It is impossible to know what will happen with Brexit in March, but the closer we get without a deal, the weaker and more volatile the sterling will become, leading to increasing prices of imports.

If you can store fertilizer, it could pay to get it on farm early to reduce the risk of the uncertainty this Spring. To help we are offering a scheme where for deliveries in January/February, payments can be split over March-May.

Call the office for more details or to place your order



## Changes to product labelling

You will see changes to the declarations of ingredients on feed labels, starting this autumn.

Previous legislation required the trace element declaration for feeds, minerals and calf milk replacers to declare the added amount of the ingredient (such as copper sulphate) rather than the active element (such as copper).

This made it difficult for feed advisers to accurately balance mineral supply to meet animal needs.

New legislation taking effect in the autumn requires declaration of the quantity of element it supplied. Labels will have meaningful trace element declarations, making it easier to check rations for total mineral supply and better balanced diets.

## Dates for your Diary

11th October	Young Farmers Mill Tour	Holsworthy Mill, 7.30pm
13th October	Wadebridge vs Bude Rugby Match	Wadebridge RFC, 3.00 Kick Off
7th November	AgriFest South West	Westpoint, Exeter, EX5 1DJ, all day event
Sat 10th November	Helston Fatstock Show	Francise Farm, Helston, TR13 0LT, all day
17th November	Cornish Winter Fair	Royal Cornwall Showground, PL27 7JE, 10am



**Harpers Feeds**  
Waldon Way, Holsworthy Industrial Estate,  
Holsworthy, Devon EX22 6ER  
**01409 254 300**  
harpers@harpersfeeds.co.uk  
www.harpersfeeds.co.uk