



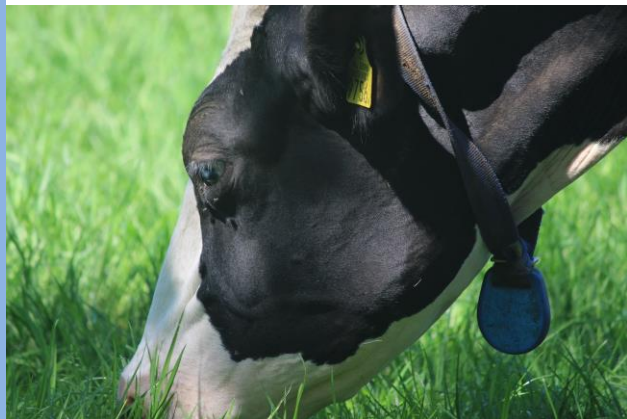
THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP

FARM NEWSLETTER MARCH 2021

Spring Grazing – Maximising Milk/Growth From Forage

With a spell of dry weather ahead and early grass growth promised, many of you will be looking forward to turnout not only to reap the benefits of grass growth but also to relieve the pressure on straw usage this winter. Whilst we are not there yet, now is the perfect time to plan ahead. Here are a few pointers to help make the most of grazing this year:

- **Check boundaries** now to avoid unexpected breakouts and **empty all water troughs** to be cleaned ahead of turnout. Stagnant water or heavy algae cover can severely limit water and forage intake
- **Plan rotations** with a daily hectare target and get the whole team involved – a visual farm plan and grazing wedge are ideal ways to explain decision and rapidly see changes that need to be acted on
 - o Keeping heavy or clay pastures for dry weather and well-draining pastures for wet days will reduce pasture damage from poaching, reduce intervention needed and maximise regrowth
- **Measure grass level and growth** using a plate meter weekly – put all this information into your grazing rotation decisions. It allows you to forecast surges in growth and optimise cow nutrition
- Start grazing in the **middle of the forage block** i.e. 24-2600kgDM/hectare:



- o This spreads cows out with less competition avoiding excessive damage when ground is still soft and works especially well for spring calvers with the first section of the calving block
- o Easy to graze down hard to 1500kg and encourage maximum regrowth early in the season
- o Saves the high end of the wedge for when the maximum number of cows are calved
- o Leaves the lower end of the wedge to grow on until later in the spring and be supported if needs be with fertiliser where conditions allow

- **Graze down to 1500kgDM/hec** but also **observe sward length**. Graze at 8–10 cm leaving a residual of 4–5 cm – sugars are stored in this stubble and support the growth of the next leaf.
- **Back fence** cows when paddock grazing – stop cows going back over grazed pasture to ensure 3 leaf grazing is maintained and quality is maximised. Also helps to reduce pasture damage
- Aim to have a different entry and exit route for each paddock - this greatly reduces poaching
- **Sample quality** intermittently through the season to get an idea of quality

Cows don't lie and they will reflect the quality of their nutrition in both yield and body condition and for growing stock in their growth rates. Where we closely control and mix rations for the housed part of the year, it is often left somewhat in the hands of the gods for the grazing block and with some simple changes we can also optimise herd production through the spring and summer grazing months.

Blackleg – Grazing risk

Where pastures have been flooded causing soil erosion or have been grazed tightly, they are extremely high risk for Blackleg disease this year. Silages that contain soil from being cut when sward length is very short can also trigger cases. Caused by *Clostridium chauvoei*, this disease can

present as lameness, a loss of appetite, rapid breathing and very high temperatures when signs first appear. However, due to the rapid onset of the disease it is very common to find fit, healthy animals dead at pasture. Calves are highest risk, especially those from 10 months to 2 years.

When an outbreak occurs, and several animals are found dead, other animals may show areas of muscle swelling and the area will become cold as it loses blood supply to the affected area and the tissue dies off. Death will occur in 12-48 hrs in these cases. Young animals are highest risk for Blackleg disease due to erupting teeth and wounds gained from fighting however it has also been linked to dirty injection sites, trauma from bulling and bruising from bad handling in any age animals. Due to the lack of warning and grazing of high-risk groups, a vaccine protocol for young grazing cattle is the best way to avoid outbreaks on farm.



Primary course of two injections 4 – 6 weeks apart covers the grazing season:

- Annual booster every 12 months gives continued immunity
- Vaccinating cows 8 – 2 weeks prior to calving provides colostrum antibodies to cover the calf for 12 weeks
- Calves can be vaccinated from 3 months old ahead of their first grazing season
- Cattle can be vaccinated as early as 2 weeks old on high risk farms but need a second full primary course at 3 months

Vet Technician Service

Our Vet Tech service with Flick Hockaday has now been running for just over a year and despite launching into what has turned out to be a global pandemic, the service has been greatly received. With farms getting busier and routinely functioning with a smaller everyday team, the Vet Tech service works alongside you and your farm vet to plan, organise and implement your healthcare strategies.

This ensures that time pressured jobs such as calf pneumonia vaccinations and disbuds that often get forgotten or delayed are done at the most efficient time and with the least amount of stress. With this in mind the service is adapted to farm needs and can be one off visits or a routine interval visit booked in on set days.

The services we are currently offering include:

- Disbudding/Dehorning
- Calf group vaccinations
- Calf weighing and performance records
- Herd vaccination – starter course and annual boosters
- Mobility Scoring
- Blood Sampling
- Magnet Administration
- Fly parasite and repellent administration
- TB test assistance



Testimonials

“You did a fantastic job of dehorning. The calves weren’t stressed or below par the next day at all. I would highly recommend your services - very professional.” Jo Jeynes Aug 2020

“We have been using the tech service for a year now and find it a valuable service. Knowing the vaccinations are done at the correct time and disbudding is no longer a job that gets left until we have an extra pair of hands to help. Having weekly visits for these jobs and weighing calves means we have accurate data to assess our calf performance.”

Ian Freeman (Round Elmore Back) Feb 2021

To find out more about the service or to see in what other ways we might be able to help on your farm, please give us a call

