



THE  
WOOD  
VETERINARY  
GROUP

FARM NEWSLETTER  
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## Nuisance Fly Control

With spells of warmer weather not intermittently appearing and silage being rowed up it means that the first flies of the season are here. When early season flies appear the rest are not far behind. Nuisance flies live for 25 days but by day 12 they start to lay around 500 flies a day so that 6,500 flies from just one female in a 2 week window – hence when they first appear it is time to act promptly.

The best way to reduce the costly impact of flies from associated diseases and reduced production is to:

- Use insect repellents/tags where possible to deter flies away from cattle

- o **Using repellents BEFORE a significant burden of flies is far more effective than waiting for flies to be a nuisance. We often see poor product response when they are applied too late into the fly season**

- Fans in sheds will keep good air flow rates which not only help to keep temperatures below the metabolic heat stress levels for cows but will reduce fly activity
- Fine spray water systems in collecting yards and parlours often help to deter flies and reduce crowding in already warm sheds
- Manage the breeding environment to reduce the number of flies around on farm. This is where Clover friendly flies come in
  - Clover Friendly flies disrupt the hatching cycle of nuisance flies and establish their own natural population on your farm.

Clover flies are parasitic wasps that target nuisance flies leaving pollinators alone and are applied to fly breeding areas around the farm every 2 weeks through the season – generally late March to October based on temperature and rainfall



**Speak to us about how best to reduce nuisance fly issues on your farm this summer. Don't forget our Vet Tech service also includes fly repellent application, dehorning and vaccinating any animals ahead of summer turnout as well as Clover fly farm management.**

## Spring Grazing – Maximising Milk/Growth From Forage

With turbulent weather patterns since January with several attempts at spring and significant winter-like spells with excessive rainfall, turnout luckily doesn't seem to be too far off for most and not too delayed for the majority of grazing units. However, grass growth is at its most variable with cold overnight temperatures and so we need careful management of our grazing block now to protect it for later in the summer and for maximising silage yields. Now is the perfect time to plan. 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 out before refilling. Stagnant water or heavy algae cover can severely limit water and forage intake. It's also highly recommended for TB guidelines



- **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 decisions and quickly 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 encourages maximum regrowth early in the season
- o Allows fresh calvers easier grazing access when they are building towards peak lactation
- 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/hectare** 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 for **multiple gateways** – if you can have a set entry and exit this greatly reduces poaching
- **Sample quality** intermittently through the season to get an idea of quality

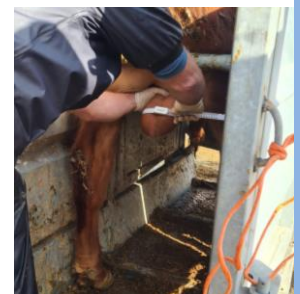
Cows don't lie and they will reflect the quality of their nutrition in both yield and body condition and for young stock in their growth rates. Where we closely control and mix rations for the housed part of the year, it is often left somewhat in the hands of the gods for the grazing block and with some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

### Beef Pre-Breed Decisions

As bulls will be back in shortly, it's time to make sure they are ready and will meet target. Fertile bulls with 40-50 cows should get 94% of cows pregnant in a 9-week block. Unfortunately, 20-30% of bulls are found to be sub-fertile from either poor sperm quality or volume. We recommend testing all bulls prior to the service period every year to allow time for bulls to be treated/recover from any issues. Or worst-case scenario for any replacements bulls to be sourced and quarantined. Younger, new, and older bulls are especially high risk for performance issues so should be prioritised for checking. A breeding soundness exam includes checking:

- Feet, legs, and locomotion (fundamental for service)
- Body condition score (aim for 3 - 3.5)
- Health treatments are up to date (vaccinations, blood samples for new purchases/accreditation, parasite control)
- Internal and external sexual organs (including testicle size/consistency)
- Semen quality (volume, density, motility and abnormalities). These parameters are assessed both on farm looking at progressive motility and using stained smears to look at sperm counts and abnormalities

Book in your bull breeding soundness exams with the practice to help guide your breeding plans.



Wood Vets Farm Team



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