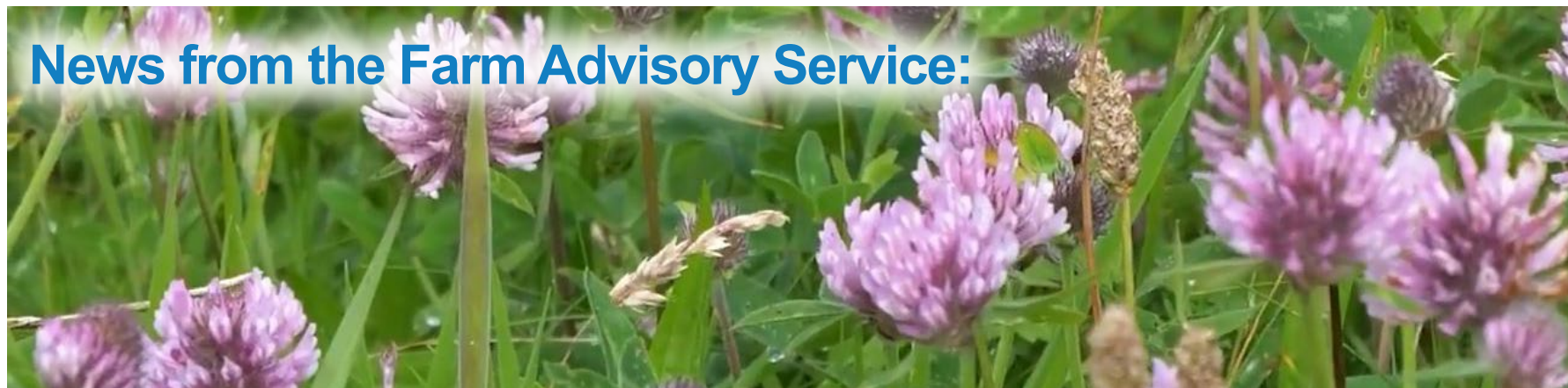


## News from the Farm Advisory Service:



### CROPCAST



#### Cropcast Conversations podcast: Sugar beet - making a comeback?

We welcome you to our first episode of *Cropcast Conversations* hosted by Principal Consultant Mark Bowsher-Gibbs. In this episode Mark is joined by Iain Riddel (Principal Consultant, SAC Consulting) as they discuss growing sugar beet in Scotland. They cover sugar beet trial work, sites, varieties, farmer group feedback and conclusions from trial work.

Listen to our episode by scanning the QR code below, or visit our FAS Sounds page at [www.fas.scot/sounds](http://www.fas.scot/sounds)



### REMINDER

SAF window closes  
Thursday 15th May

visit [www.ruralpayments.org](http://www.ruralpayments.org)  
for more info

### Feeding the milking herd at grass - what to consider?



Buffer feeding grazing dairy cows is a tricky balancing act, especially when grass intake and quality is unknown. How do you know if you are meeting cow requirements? Analysing fresh grass, along with grass dry matter intake estimates are useful for your nutritionist to advise on cost-effective feeding to optimise productivity.

Current grass quality information is available from AHDB's Forage for Knowledge and AFBI's GrassCheck:

- Forage for Knowledge (AHDB)  
[ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/forage-for-knowledge](http://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/forage-for-knowledge)
- GrassCheck (Agriseach)  
[www.agriseach.org/grasscheck](http://www.agriseach.org/grasscheck)

Do not overestimate how much milk grass can support. A 650kg cow eating 15kg of grass dry matter (DM), with grass at 20% DM and 12 MJ of ME/kg DM, will support M+20 litres of milk. However, on wet days, where grass is only 14% DM, milk from grass could be as low as M+10 litres. Cows also graze less when it is dark, so less milk will be produced from grass as we pass the longest day.

Given the high protein content in grass, feeding a 16% protein parlour cake should be more than sufficient for cows grazing full time. Including quality bypass protein such as soya or protected rapemeal in the buffer feed will help support milk yields and complement the rapidly degradable protein in grass.

Look at milk urea levels to see whether there is scope to reduce protein supplementation. Levels over 0.03% or 300mg/l indicate excess rumen degradable protein in relation to rumen available energy. Feeding starchy, high-energy cereals will help utilise excess protein. However, the low fibre and high sugar content of grass means that SARA (sub-acute ruminal acidosis) can be a risk. Swapping some cereal in the buffer feed for high fibre sources e.g. sugar beet pulp or soya hulls, can help. Or consider a high fibre, low starch parlour cake and/or a rumen buffer. These changes can also help maintain butterfat levels.

Don't forget about minerals at grass, especially magnesium for staggers prevention. If feeding a mineralised cake and another source of minerals e.g. a bagged supplement or mineralised blend, then magnesium supply is likely sufficient but it's worth a conversation with your nutritionist to ensure that requirements are met.

*Lorna MacPherson, SAC Consulting*

### Free Events

At the Farm Advisory Service we run a range of events both online and in-person.

Visit [www.fas.scot/events](http://www.fas.scot/events) to sign up or contact the advice line and we'll help you get booked on.

**Grassland Roadshow Ayrshire - Managing Grass for Dairy**  
Crosshands, 8th May, 11:00am - 2:00pm

**Soil Myth Busting Series**  
Ayrshire, 21st May, 6:00pm - 9:00pm  
Dumfriesshire, 22nd May, 6:00pm - 9:00pm  
Scottish Borders, 28th May, 6:00pm - 9:00pm  
Aberdeenshire, 29th May, 6:00pm - 9:00pm

### Insect pollinators - their value to Scottish agriculture



Flowering crops are alive with bees, hoverflies and beetles all providing crucial pollination services. These beasties boost seed production in oilseed rape and beans, and enhance yield and quality in apples, raspberries and strawberries. Their contribution to UK agricultural is estimated to be worth ~£630 M per year.

Even if you don't grow insect pollinated crops, pollinators still play a role on your farm. Hoverflies and wasps help to control pests such as aphids, and most wildflowers rely on insect pollinators – supporting the rich mix of habitats scattered across Scotland's farms.

Given their vital role, there is increasing concern over pollinator declines across the globe. Scotland, however, is bucking this trend with pollinators actually increasing - possibly thanks to warmer summers. While Scotland's pollinators seem to be faring okay, this does not mean we should rest on our laurels. Supporting pollinators now will help future-proof farms as we move towards more sustainable systems. We will become increasingly reliant on natural enemies as insecticides lose their potency or are withdrawn from the market, while moving to feeding livestock with UK-grown plant-based proteins will see more insect pollinated pulses grown.

The Farm Advisory Service's Pollinator Portal offers practical tips to boost pollinators on your land. Have a look and see what would work for you. With pollinators quickly learning where new food sources are you won't have long to wait until you are rewarded with the hum of insects. The Pollinator Portal can be found at [www.fas.scot/environment/biodiversity/pollinator-portal/](http://www.fas.scot/environment/biodiversity/pollinator-portal/)

*Dr Lorna Cole, SAC Consulting*

For further information, articles, videos and more visit our website at [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot)

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service is funded by the Scottish Government. It is delivered by SAC Consulting, part of Scotland's Rural College, and Ricardo Energy and Environment.

If you need more advice on any topic, the Farm Advisory Service has a range of support and help available:

#### Advice line

For free telephone advice on a wide variety of topics including cross compliance, water framework directive requirements, climate change and other technical issues call us on **0300 323 0161** or email [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot). The advice line operates between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

#### Bespoke Advice and Grants

FAS can also help you to increase the profitability and sustainability of your farming business through Scottish Government grants including Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) – worth up to £2,000.

The ILMP will identify opportunities and cost savings for your business, based on an independent and confidential assessment of your business by an experienced farm business adviser of your choosing. As part of your plan you can choose to benefit from up to two further specialist advice plans.

#### Online

Our website contains articles, videos and much more at [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot)