

News from the Farm Advisory Service:



FAS TV - Feeding out multi-cut silage

In this episode of FAS TV, we are in Cheshire revisiting the Glenn family at Distinctive Holsteins, who were on earlier in the season discussing their journey from traditional silage making to a multi-cut system.

Louise and Will provide us with an insight into feeding out multi-cut silage and balancing the ration to maintain the high performance of their cows throughout the year.

Find our episode by using QR code below, or visit www.youtube.com/fasscot



SAF window opens Friday 14th March

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visit www.ruralpayments.org for more info

Spring sulphur applications to boost grass growth

Sulphur is an essential nutrient for plant growth which livestock farmers often overlook. The application of sulphur to grassland in the spring can boost dry matter yields by 10-15% (AHBD, 2025), but more notably, improve grazing and silage quality, particularly after an unseasonably wet winter.



Although light sandy soils are most prone to sulphur deficiencies, applications of sulphur will also benefit grass growth if applied to:

- Mineral soils in high-rainfall areas
- Multi-cut silage systems
- Rotational grazing systems
- Land receiving large amounts of nitrogen fertiliser

Sulphur works in conjunction with nitrogen in the formation of protein – therefore land receiving large quantities of nitrogen fertiliser and/or producing a high volume of dry matter would require additional sulphur.

How much sulphur should be applied?

Where a deficiency is expected, RB209 recommends:

- Silage – 40kg SO₃ before each cut
- Grazing – 20-30kg SO₃ for each 100kgN/ha that's applied

The most common form of inorganic sulphur is ammonium sulphate (60% SO₃). Care should be taken to avoid over-applying sulphur during the growing season to prevent copper and selenium deficiencies in livestock. Small and frequent applications are advised on grazing fields.

Sulphur from manure

Manure is a valuable source of sulphur, however, due to the slow mineralisation of S within organic matter during the spring, it is unlikely that it would supply enough sulphur to meet crop demand. RB209 states that 45% of SO₃ would be available to grassland after a spring application of cattle slurry. If 30m³ per hectare of 6% DM cattle slurry was applied to a field, approximately 9.6kg SO₃ would be available.

Manure	Total SO ₃ (kg/m ³)	Availability	Available SO ₃ (kg/m ³)	Total SO ₃ available per 30m ³ /ha
6% DM Cattle Slurry	0.7	45% (spring applied)	0.32	9.6kg/ha

Figures from RB209

Conclusion

Mineral soils with multi-cut silage systems are likely to require sulphur applications to improve forage quality and yield, particularly after an unseasonably wet winter. This is worth bearing in mind for this year's silage season, especially if protein levels in grass silage were lower than expected last year. Sulphur fertiliser should be applied in addition to slurry and FYM where deficiencies are expected.

Marcus Fox, SAC Consulting

This article is part of the January edition of Milk Manager News. Read our full publication at: www.fas.scot/publication/milk-manager-news-january-2025/



Free Events

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

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

Lairg Crofting Discussion Group - Habitat Identification
Lairg, 22nd March, 10:30am - 2:30pm

Biodiversity Audits - Help with Habitat Mapping
Online, 26th March, 7:30pm - 8:30pm

Managing first time lambing ewes



Inexperienced ewes have higher lamb mortality regardless of age at mating. This is because they are physiologically immature, they need to have given birth for everything to develop completely.

They tend to have a longer birth process. However, this doesn't mean she will need assistance if she is given time and space. The inexperienced ewe is more sensitive to environmental disturbances, and more likely to abandon her lamb if disturbed. They may take a little longer to start licking the lamb after birth and are more likely to show aggression and to move away as the lamb tries to suck. With time, however, these behaviours disappear, and inexperienced ewes will learn to show proper maternal care.

Ewes that do a good job in their first pregnancy will continue to be good mothers in subsequent pregnancies, so it pays to give the ewe the best opportunity for everything to work well.

Ewes always prefer a quiet and calm birth environment, this is even more important for the inexperienced ewe. They take longer to progress through labour and bond with the lamb. Her lambs may be slower to stand and suckle but, intervening too early can affect the development of the bond and increases rejection risk. First time lambers are less able to rear multiples than experienced ewes because the biological processes are less efficient. This is one of the reasons that lambing ewe lambs, normally targeting one lamb per ewe, results in better gimmer performance as the process has been established in time to rear more lambs.

Poppy Frater, SAC Consulting



Want more information and advice about lambing?
Find more of our lambing resources at www.fas.scot/livestock/sheep/lambing/

or contact our advice line at advice@fas.scot or on 0300 323 0161

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. 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