



Test before you treat event summary

In August, we held an event near St Boswells, 'Test before you Treat', where we discussed anthelmintic resistance and managing parasites in livestock. If you missed it you can catch up on the four key sessions in this video. The sessions covered include:

- Roundworms with SRUC veterinary investigation officer Andrew Robinson
- Liver fluke with Diana Hickson, Hawick Vets
- Sheep scab with Marion Mcmillan from SRUC Veterinary Services
- PSF Animal Health & Welfare interventions with Tiffany Stephenson, SAC Consulting

To watch this video, use the QR code below or search for Scotland's Farm Advisory Service on Youtube



In the Argyll area? We have another Test before you Treat event on 24th September. Visit www.fas.scot/events for more information

Grazing winter cereals

Grazing winter cereals is not new, but with a move towards greater consideration of soil health and reducing inputs, the practice is becoming more common on farms in Scotland. The principle is simple. In the winter when there can be limited forage, utilise early established autumn sown cereals to graze sheep. Over the last few years SRUC have looked at the crop benefits of grazing winter cereals and this year are undergoing a project to understand livestock growth when grazing these crops.

What is the nutritional value to livestock?

Winter Barley

Date	Crude Protein g/kg DM	ME MJ/kg DM
16/11/2020	313	14.8
30/11/2020	304	15.5
14/12/2020	219	13.7
05/01/2021	284	14.9
19/01/2021	280	14.9
25/02/2021	264	14.8
22/03/2021	217	14.1
13/04/2021	170	13.7
07/05/2021	149	13.6

(Data from Mixed Project R. Walker et al.)

Winter Wheat

Date	Crude Protein g/kg DM	ME MJ/kg DM
30/11/2020	291	15.3
14/12/2020	281	13.3
05/01/2021	286	14.6
19/01/2021	318	14.6
25/02/2021	293	14.2
22/03/2021	267	14.3
13/04/2021	248	14.5
07/05/2021	276	15.2

What are the effects on crops?

From the trials carried out the main findings were:

- There was no clear difference in tillering, disease pressure, and weed numbers;
- Growth stages were similar between the grazed and ungrazed during the season;
- There was no statistically significant difference between the grain yield of grazed and ungrazed;
- There was a slight reduction in overall crop height in grazed relative to ungrazed.

On-farm experience has varied depending on winter weather, time of grazing, duration of grazing and grazing intensity. However, observations have included an increase in yield, a reduction in disease pressure (no T0 fungicide required) and reduced weed pressure.

What are the impacts on soil?

The benefits to the soil are less well defined, as in real terms the grazing periods are short and unlikely to have a benefit in the growing season (apart from some available nitrogen from the sheep urine). In the medium to long term, the addition of organic matter and organic fertiliser through sheep faeces should stimulate soil biology and increase nutrient cycling in the soil and reduce the resilience in inorganic inputs.

What are the benefits for the arable farmer?

For the arable farmer there are a number of benefits: the crop can be sown earlier knowing that if it is strong going into the winter it can be controlled using grazing; an additional income can be earned through grazing a third parties' livestock; potential reduction in fertiliser through the addition of inorganic fertiliser; reduction in fungicide spend through reduced need for a T0 spray. There is a need for fencing but in many cases, graziers are happy to erect temporary electric fencing and manage health and welfare of the livestock when they are grazing.

What are the benefits for the livestock farmer?

For the livestock there are also a number of benefits: availability of good quality grazing at a time of year when grass is less plentiful; clean grazing that is unlikely to have had stock on it for a number of years; reduce pressure on their own grazing.

David Ross, 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 to sign up or contact the advice line and we'll help you get booked on.

Test Before You Treat - Argyllshire
Lochgilthead, 24th September, 10:30am - 3:00pm

Farm Wildlife Walks - Loch Lomond
Gartocharn, 24th September, 3:30pm - 6:30pm

Soil Myth Busting - Inverness
Inverness, 24th September, 6:00pm - 9:00pm

Soil Myth Busting - Perth
Perth, 25th September, 6:00pm - 9:00pm

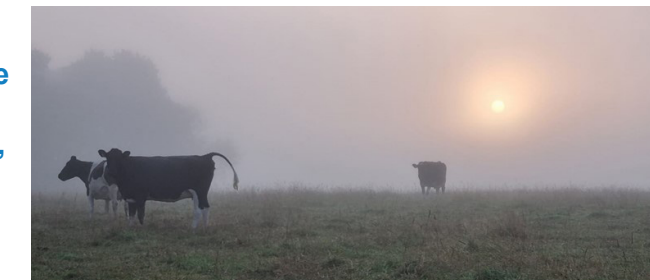
Deer Farming at Whitriggs - Wintering Options
Denholm, 26th September, 10:30am - 3:00pm

Conducting a Biodiversity Workshop - Aberdeenshire
Finzean, 30th September, 10:30am - 2:00pm

Autumn grazing for rotational grazers

Making the most of what we've got left

Your farm infrastructure can massively increase or limit your adaptability in the autumn grazing period. Ensure the tracks are in good condition, there are lots of access points and water troughs in fields to enable back-fencing and consider on-off grazing in response to weather.



Grazing:

During the late summer and autumn, it is important to walk the grass every week. Knowing your feed demand going into autumn will help to dictate when supplementation should be used to slow the rotation. By early autumn, the rotation should be slowed to 30 days to build covers so that the covers are there to meet demand when growth slows down. Judging the timing of when to start the final rotation is specific to your farm, typical winter growth rates and grazing system.

Going into winter with a flat grass wedge, ideally with covers of 2150 - 2200kg DM/ha, will help ensure there isn't too much grass going into spring which risks deterioration at the base of sward, reduced quality and subsequently requires a high stocking density to keep on top of.

Summary Notes:

1. Give yourself more options by designing infrastructure to handle grazing in wetter months.
2. Aim for residuals of 4-4.5cm or 1500kgDM/ha in late summer to reduce dead matter carry over and encourage tillering.
3. Use grass growth data, leaf stages, feed budget and ground conditions to determine when to start final rotations and shut up completely for winter.
4. Manage supplementation to speed up or slow down the rotation based on your knowledge of your own farm and cow condition.
5. AHDB and Teagasc both provide an autumn grazing planner to help plan your final rotation and make sure you are closing off paddocks and hitting peak covers at the right time.
6. Despite the best laid plans, rainfall is likely to be the limiting factor, so do the best you can and look forward to the spring.

Freya Lance, SAC Consulting

This article is part of the September Milk Manager News. To read the publication, visit: www.fas.scot/publication/milk-manager-news-september-2024/

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.



National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

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



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