

# News from the Farm Advisory Service:



## Webinar catch up - WiA Whole Farm Plan: Biodiversity audits

### Do you know your Curlews from your Cuckoos? Your Heather from your Harebell?

Improving biodiversity and wildlife habitats on farms is going to become an integral part of receiving farm support as we move towards the new schemes.

Catch up with our webinar recording from 19th November, where Mary-Jane Lawrie from SAC Consulting will show you how to identify key habitats on your farm and provide tips on enhancing what you have.

Find our video by visiting our YouTube channel by using the QR code or the link below  
[www.youtube.com/FASScot](https://www.youtube.com/FASScot)



## Preparing for Sustainable Farming (PSF) Deadline

All claims must be submitted  
by end of February 2025

## Mineral requirements in housed cattle

### Why do cows need minerals?

Minerals are vital for the cow to function as they are important in several processes within the body which support health and performance. Minerals are required at every stage of life, whether it is growth during youngstock, fertility in heifers and cows, milk production or growth of a foetus during pregnancy.



### Why cattle in housed systems?

Theoretically, in a housed system, there should be a greater control of diet due to it being ration formulated for the animal depending on her stage in production or growth. Therefore, there is a better understanding of what exactly the cow is intaking per day.

### Mineral audits

A good starting place for determining whether the ration is providing the minerals required by the cow. A mineral audit analyses any mineral input into the diet including forage, concentrates, water and any other supplements.

### Getting the balance right

Oversupplying or undersupply of minerals can influence animal performance and therefore, profit.

Three reasons why oversupply is an issue: -

1. **Expensive** – mineral supplementation is costly.
2. **Animal Performance** – potential risk of toxicity with certain minerals.
3. **Excretion into the Environment** – if oversupplied, certain minerals can be excreted through the faeces.

Within dairy herds, there are two minerals which tend to be oversupplied: -

- **Copper** – ingested from the feed, which goes into the bloodstream to be taken to the liver to be stored.
- **Iodine** – generally it is fed above the recommended intake and milk is the major excretory pathway.

For beef cattle, there are some key considerations when it comes to mineral supplementation including the following: -

- **Finishing cattle** – large daily liveweight gains, are the minerals meeting requirements for rapid growth whilst maintaining healthy animals.
- **Data** – more accurate information about growth rates and what minerals are being supplied.

### Key take home messages

- Consider doing a mineral audit to determine if you are meeting the recommended mineral intakes for your cattle
- Consider the response of the animal, is it performing as expected?
- Do not over-supply into the range where you may negatively affect performance or have considerable environmental excretion.

*Dr Cara Campbell, SAC Consulting*

Further information can be found in our full article at:  
[www.fas.scot/article/mineral-requirements-in-housed-cattle/](https://www.fas.scot/article/mineral-requirements-in-housed-cattle/)

## Free Events

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

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

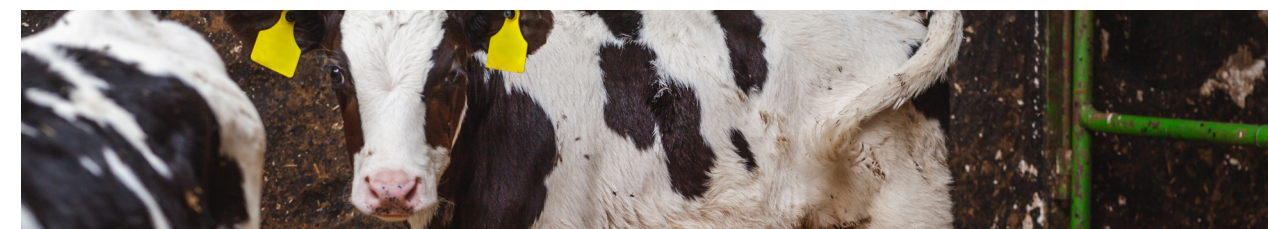
**Suckler Nutrition Workshop - Feeding for Success**  
Blairgowrie, 9th January 10:30am - 2:30pm

**Sheep Nutrition Workshop - Keith**  
Keith, 14th January, 10:00am - 3:00pm

**Sheep Nutrition Workshop - Wick**  
Wick, 15th January, 10:00am - 3:00pm

**Crofting Sheep - Nutrition and Health Before Lambing**  
Kyle, 15th January, 6:00pm - 8:00pm

## Should you feed silage to weaned calves?



**Should weaned dairy heifer calves be fed grass silage or straw as the source of forage? The argument against silage is that the rumen is not fully developed until five to six months so calves may struggle to fully digest and utilise grass silage.**

The benefits of a straw-based diet are:

- Calves will produce more saliva to help buffer the rumen, which is more favourable for feed conversion efficiency.
- More concentrates (starch) are typically fed with straw, driving more butyrate and propionate production in the rumen, aiding papillae development to increase the surface area for nutrient absorption.
- Straw aids development and thickening of the muscular rumen wall and its "scratch factor" effect encourages normal papillae development.
- Faeces will be drier - calves produce wetter faeces when fed silage, meaning a wetter, dirtier environment with a greater coccidiosis risk.

Therefore, a straw-based ration may be more favourable for faster rumen development, better nutrient absorption and growth. However, if feeding silage, quality must be excellent. Well-fermented silages are more palatable, supporting higher intakes and growth rates when feeding less concentrates compared to a straw-based ration.

### Tips for feeding silage to newly weaned dairy calves:

1. Silage should be over 30% dry matter. If silage is wetter (and more acidic) include a rumen buffer.
2. Analyse silage so your nutritionist can advise on the concentrate quality and feed rate to achieve target growth rates.
3. Introduce silage gradually while still feeding straw and increase the silage inclusion over 10 days.
4. Ensure any concentrate change is also gradual - mix for a few days, gradually increasing the proportion of the new concentrate.
5. Calves should be fully weaned for at least two weeks before making any diet change.

*Lorna MacPherson, SAC Consulting*

To read the full article, please visit our Milk Manager News publication at:  
[www.fas.scot/publication/milk-manager-news-november-2024/](https://www.fas.scot/publication/milk-manager-news-november-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](mailto:advice@fas.scot)  
W: [www.fas.scot](https://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](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](https://www.fas.scot)