

FORAGE for PROFIT



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

The Forage for Profit Discussion Group are a group of beef and sheep producers based in South West Scotland with a common desire to improve business profitability through improved utilisation of grass and forage crops.

December Update—By Mid December, Newton Stewart had seen a total of 1423mm rain since 1st January 2020. It has been a variable year with extreme dry and wet conditions however despite the concerns in June plentiful silage was made and forage crops have yielded quite well. By and large the peaks and troughs of grass growth, BREXIT uncertainty and the additional challenges that COVID has placed on the industry have been offset by a good year for the beef and lamb prices, remaining high in the Autumn when normally they would fall. See graphs. And we will just have to wait and see what 2021 holds...

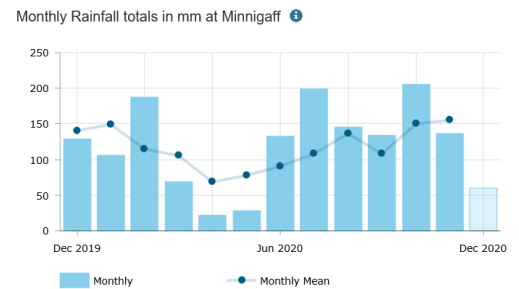


Plate Meters

There are many different plate meters on the market but essentially they are all designed to measure compressed grass and give you a reading in kg DM/ha.

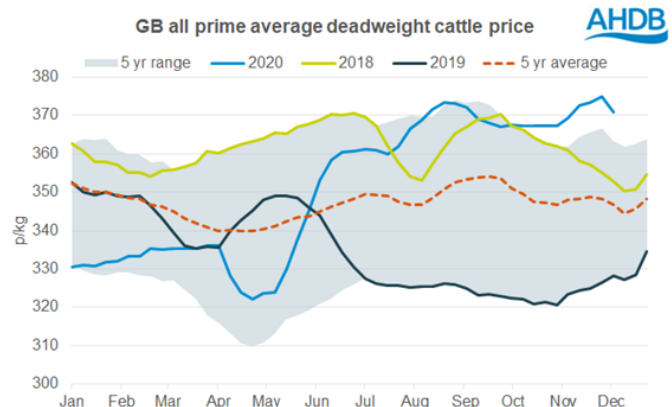
Most plate meters will come with a software package to record and analyse your grass measurements. Alternatively you can use standalone websites such as Agrinet. With Agrinet you can share your growth data with other members of a discussion group or neighbours.

Basic plate meter models do not calculate the average DM/ha automatically so whilst doing your research to consider the following:

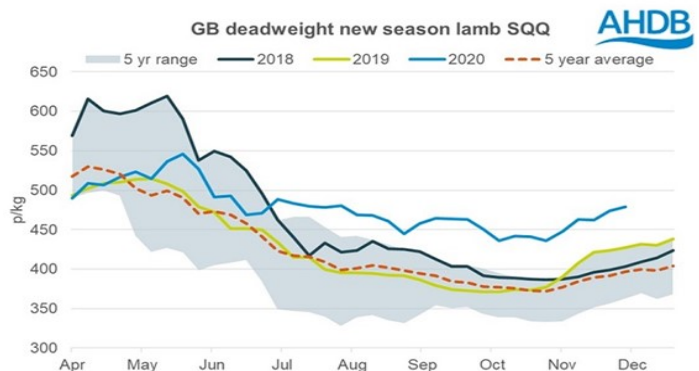
- ◆ Do you want field averages to be calculated automatically?
- ◆ Do you want to store field information so you follow same route each time you measure?
- ◆ Do you want information to be transferred to computer by USB or Bluetooth?

2020 Market Overview

CATTLE



SHEEP



For more information and events from the Farm Advisory Service see www.fas.scot or find us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter @FasScot



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



FORAGE *for* PROFIT — December Update

Planning Forage Crops

When planning the set up of your field for a forage crop it is important to consider:

- ◆ Access to water
- ◆ Power
- ◆ Field Access
- ◆ Where Supplementary feed will be feed
- ◆ Lie-back area

If fields are poaching in the winter consider separating your field to provide multiple lie back areas. These extra areas of crop could be used to lower the stocking density and minimise poaching or to give the animals access to a clean area halfway through the winter. Remember to leave a generous buffer area around the field to catch any sediment run off. This area could also be used as clean area to move sheep from gates to the feed areas.



Moving into the midst of Winter weather brings with it challenges for livestock facing the elements. So a few reminders to practice what we have discussed this year:

- ◆ **Monitor BCS of breeding stock closely and use this info to group according to feed needs**
- ◆ **Read the label for any purchased feeds to ensure you are supplying the correct ME, and source of CP for stock class**
- ◆ **Weigh growing stock to ensure they are meeting target DLWG**

Forage Crop Costs

Forage Crops can be an effective way to finish lambs in Autumn/Early Winter or to use for overwintering of livestock. Below are approximate costs for Forage Rape and Fodderbeet:

Forage Rape—Direct Drilled

Spray Off	£13.50
Seed	£12.50
Fert	£36.00
Drilling	£22.00
Total	£84.00/acre

Fodderbeet

Spray Off	£13.50
Seed	£85.00
Fert	£125.00
Sprays	£60.00
Cultivation	£80.00
Total	£363.00/acre

Silage Quality

The dry weather of 2020 has no doubt had an effect on silage quality this year with lower ME and lower CP levels being common for silages cut in May and June. We cannot control the weather but we can ensure grass has sufficient nutrients to cope with stress which may help.

Potash is critical to a plants ability to move water and nutrients around the plant, it is also directly linked to a plants ability to utilise Nitrogen so ensuring Potash levels in the soil are sufficient will help ensure that plant is resilient to conditions such as frost or drought.

The Metabolisable Energy of silage is directly related to the digestibility of the plant. The higher the stem to leaf ration the lower the D value and ME will be. Aim to cut silage with no more than 25% seed heads emerged.

Sulphur is required for a plant to uptake and utilise Nitrogen and can increase CP levels by 4-8%. Sulphur is not stored by plants.

To help make the most of your grass for silage:

- ◆ Soil sample to check pH, P&K levels
- ◆ Apply Sulphur with your N fertiliser
- ◆ Cut silage earlier with fewer seed heads emerged.
- ◆ Cut silage late morning when sugar content is highest