

# FORAGE for PROFIT



National Advice Hub  
T: 0300 323 0161  
E: [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot)  
W: [www.fas.scot](http://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.

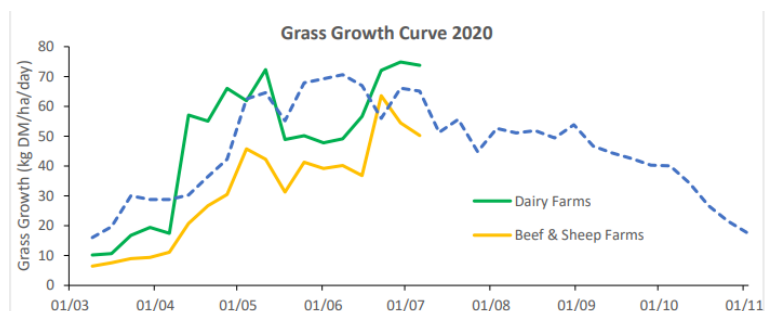
**July Update** — The dry conditions throughout May and June have now been broken with significant rainfall across the South West. Grasscheck information shows that the grass DM yield for March-June averaged 4.5t DM/ha —1.3t DM/ha behind the longterm GB average. See graph below from GrassCheck GB demonstrating the UK growth curve to date. Uptake of Nitrogen by plants will be slower during dry weather so now we have had moisture there will be mineralizable N available in the soil to support short term growth for those plants. Another impact of the dry weather will be grass quality. When stressed, grass plants respond by going into their reproductive phase and will put up a seedhead so topping will be a useful tool to maintain quality for the rest of the season.

## Dry Weather Strategies

Despite the recent rainfall soils are still quite dry and plants will need time to recover so it is important not to rush back into pastures, Grass plants will have used their stored energy in the roots and will require green leaf for photosynthesis and time to restore these reserves before they should be grazed. Grazing too early will delay recovery further.

To accommodate the slow growth demand needs to be reduced so consider the following actions:

- ◆ Introduce more paddocks to your rotation—you **must** monitor growth so as not to forfeit grass quality!
- ◆ Feed out surplus silage to give grass extra time to grow
- ◆ Use concentrates to buffer the gap between supply and demand of feed
- ◆ Sell trading stock early
- ◆ Strip graze some silage paddocks—beware of deferring your feed shortage until next Spring!
- ◆ Prioritise your stock groups
- ◆ Consider a forage crop to boost winter feed stocks



Source: [www.grasscheckgb.co.uk](http://www.grasscheckgb.co.uk)

## Sowing Forage Crops

Before choosing your Forage Crop you need to know:

- ◆ What class of stock will be grazing crop
- ◆ When will you require crop to be fed out
- ◆ pH and P&K status of field
- ◆ Establishment Method

Kale should to be in no later than 3rd week in June for feeding in January as it takes 200 days to mature. Forage Rape and Stubble Turnips give more flexibility as they can be grazed between 70 and 120 days after sowing depending on varieties.

Forage crops will struggle in a pH below 6. Expect yield penalties if you do sow below 6. Forage Rape and stubble turnips will need 80kg N, 25kg P and 50 kg of K on moderate P&K status soils.

For more information and events from the Farm Advisory Service see [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot) or find us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter @FasScot



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# FORAGE *for* PROFIT — July Update

## Applying Fertiliser After Dry Weather

Nitrogen requirements and uptake is heavily influenced by weather conditions so it is important to match applications to soil conditions, crop requirements and demand for feed as these change throughout the year.

For those of you that have not ventured into splitting your nitrogen applications, this dry spell is a good example when savings could have been made by not applying N when no rain is forecasted in the next week or so. A lot of the nitrogen already applied prior to the dry period was lost which is damaging for both profit and the environment. The sward may still respond to excess nitrogen so be prepared for late season growth and decide if any final N application are needed. It has always been advised that no additional N be applied to grass after mid-August due to the supply of N from soil organic matter. This reduces the risk of winter losses of nitrogen from the soil and winter damage to the grass. Remembering this will be extra important this year.

Potassium plays a critical role in the uptake and utilisation of Nitrogen. Potash deficiency increases a plants susceptibility to drought, lowers yield, reduces response to Nitrogen applied and increases risk of N losses amongst many other effects. If in doubt soil sample after silage to ensure adequate soil K levels.

Grass growth may be looking promising but it would still be good practice to take stock now of the quality and quantity of silage you have made so far. Purchased feed such as straw and cereals look like they will be more expensive so make the most of your home grown feed to control your winter costs!

## Worming Youngstock

Weaned calves in their first year of grazing or youngstock in their 2nd grazing season or grazing land previously grazed by cattle are most susceptible to a worm burden.

New leys and silage aftermath are considered low risk grazing. Alternatively a leader follower system where younger cattle are followed by older cattle will help to reduce risk.

Faecal egg sampling for cattle is the same as sheep and can be also be used to determine the efficacy of products.

Ensure when treating stock you have considered the withdrawal periods of products, suitability for the types of parasite you are controlling, dose rate, application method and the period of cover offered by product.

Price per pack is not an indicator of value for money!

## Vets Warning of Worm Burden Spike

Vets are warning of a spike in worm egg counts after the rain. Worms have not been able to complete their lifecycle during the dry weather and have advised to monitor egg counts closely and combine this with lamb weighing to monitor drops in performance.

### TAKING FAECAL EGG SAMPLES:

- ◆ Samples should be taken from 10% of the group being tested. A minimum of 10 samples should be taken
- ◆ Samples should be random with each sample the size of a 50p
- ◆ Samples must be fresh and kept refrigerated. Samples should be taken to vets/lab asap.

Vet analysis of your samples will help you to decide on the requirement for treatments, and to choose the most appropriate product to treat with.

### How worm burdens affect lambs

