

FORAGE for PROFIT



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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.

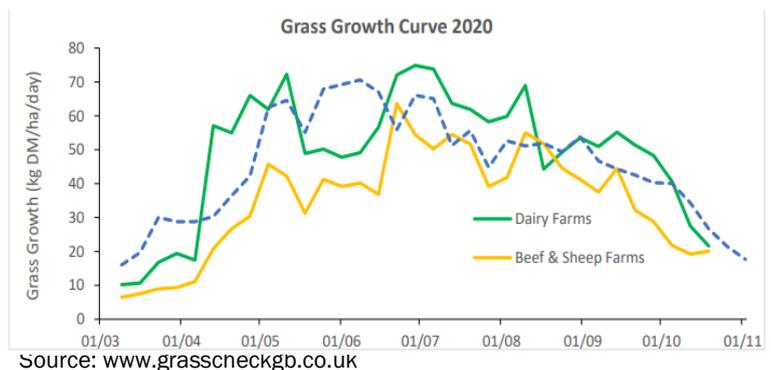
October Update — Autumn well and truly arrived in October with an monthly rainfall at Minnigaff of 168mm. On two days in October rainfall was in excess of 25mm in a 24hr period. The final GrassCheck GB measurements were taken in mid October with the average total grass yield to date for the UK at 9.5t DM/ha. This is 1.4t behind 2019 which is most likely a result of the dry period in early Summer-see graph. Scotland's average yield across dairy and beef and sheep farms was 8.6t DM/ha. The GrassCheck graph below shows the grass growth trends over 2020. Grounds conditions are soft at best so it is important to take steps to minimise damage to soils and swards through excessive poaching.

Lambs on Forage Crops

Finishing lambs need an intake of Dry Matter which is 4% of their bodyweight. When feeding out consider the following points:

- ◆ Utilisation will be lower in wet conditions so a larger allocation will be needed to achieve necessary intake
- ◆ The ME and CP content is highest in the leaf and upper stems so use fences to ensure lambs are getting access to a balanced diet and not being pushed too hard to graze lower stems but equally not eating all the leaf first
- ◆ Ensure you have a clean run back area to try and keep lambs clean or consider belly clipping if they are quite woolly
- ◆ Try to batch lambs by weight so that is easier to calculate feed allocation
- ◆ Forage crops can be have varying levels of trace elements some of which are toxic so monitor lamb performance closely for any adverse reactions
- ◆ Weigh lambs regularly to ensure they are being sold at target weights
- ◆ Forage crops are best used for finishing lambs so longer keep lambs are best kept on grass until they are closer to the finishing phase.

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



Calf Weaning Transition

Weaning is a stressful time and there are various factors to consider to help minimise this stress and reduce the negative impact on the calf.

- ◆ Creep feeding before weaning will help prepare the rumen microbes for a change in diet, calves should be consuming at least 1kg day at weaning. Calves fed creep prior to weaning can weigh up to 25kg heavier at weaning
- ◆ Administer any vaccinations/drenches/ castration/dehorning well in advance of weaning to allow calves time to recover from treatments before weaning.
- ◆ Ensure cows are out of sight and earshot of calves once weaned
- ◆ Ensure calves have adequate clean water supply
- ◆ Ensure calves have plenty of feeding space and feed in front of them



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FORAGE for PROFIT — October Update

Measuring Forage Crops—Forage Rape/Stubble Turnips

Measuring your forage crop will allow accurate allocations of forage crop to be made to livestock ensuring their feed demands are met and the crop is utilised to its potential.

How to Measure Your Crop:

- ◆ Using a 1m² quadrant take multiple random samples across the field by throwing the square over the top of the crop. Take atleast 1 sample per ha and 4 samples for fields between 1-4ha.
- ◆ Using a pair of secateurs cut the stems of each of the plants within the square or remove turnips
- ◆ Put all the plants In a bag and weigh the bag. Cut the stems 80-100mm above ground and remove dirt from bulbs
- ◆ Take an average of all the sample weighs you have taken to give you a weight in kg per m²
- ◆ Multiply your kg/m² x 10,000 to provide kg/ha
- ◆ Send a sample to the lab for a DM test then multiply the fresh weight in kg/ha x DM
- ◆ This will give a yield result in kg/DM/ha which can be used for budgeting.

REMINDER - Use body condition scoring of breeding stock and weighing for saleable stock to monitor performance. Regular weighing of youngstock will identify any issues such as ration formulation or perhaps underlying health issues and the more frequent the quicker action can be taken to resolve issues. Body Condition Score of breeding stock is directly related to performance of them and their offspring so ensure your breeding stock are heading into the Winter with sufficient fat cover to cope with adverse weather.

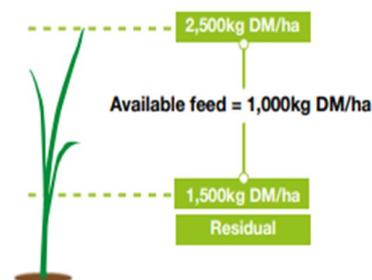
Feed Allocation in DM

Stock Class	Allocation as % of liveweight
Dry ewe	1.5
Dry cow	
Mature rams or bull	
Late lactation cow	2
Late pregananyc ewe	
Late pregnant cow	
Finishing cattle	2.5
Early to mid lactation cows	
Mid or late lactation ewes	
Breeding replacements	
Growing cattle	3
Early lactation ewes	
Flushing ewes	
Flushing cows	
Growing lambs	4

Grass Budgeting

When calculating available feed you need to know:

- ◆ Animal intake requirements - stock class, weight and stage of pregnancy if applicable.
- ◆ Feed available - grass cover less residual grass cover.



To calculate how many days feed is available in a paddock:

$$\frac{\text{available feed}}{\text{total intake requirement}}$$

Eg 100 dry ewes @ 70kg with 1.5% of bodyweight intake requirement = 1kg DM/day x 100 = 100kg DM/day total intake

Available feed = 2500kg DM/ha - 1500kg DM/ha = 1000kg DM/ha

$$\frac{1000 \text{ kg DM/ha}}{100} = 10 \text{ days}$$

1 ha will provide 10 days of feeding for the 100 dry ewes.