

## NE Organic Discussion Group

# Newsletter





## January 2022

Welcome to the January, and first of 2022, edition of the Newsletter. May I wish you all a belated Happy New Year.

We are continuing to enjoy some unseasonal, good weather for January. I hope we do not pay for it over the next few months when we are looking for spring weather.

As usual the Newsletter contains a mix of articles and news: -

Production without Antibiotics in the Organic Dairy Sector by Lorna MacPherson, Dairy Consultant

Pre-lambing rotation in 2022 by Poppy Frater, Sheep Specialist

White Clover by Lorna Galloway, Agricultural Consultant, SAC Consulting

At the end there is the usual news section which contains links to ORC Highlights from the Oxford Real Farming Conference and how to protect and improve your soils; notice of an upcoming meeting, an AECS update and news from the Soil Association.

As ever, get in touch if you have any questions or want more information.

## Production without Antibiotics in the Organic Dairy Sector

Some organic dairy farmers are now facing tighter regulations on the use of antibiotics. From April 2022 all dairy farmers supplying milk to Omsco will have to comply with the PWAB (Production Without Antibiotics) standard. This means that any milk producing animal within the herd that receives antibiotics cannot have their milk going for human consumption. That applies to milk from that animal's whole lifetime and not just from that lactation.

PWAB certification allows organic products to meet the additional regulations required to allow them to be exported to the USA and retain their organic certification. While some UK herds already meet the PWAB requirement, with Omsco already having a US market for PWAB cheese and clarified butter, it will shortly be compulsory for all Omsco dairy farmers. This UK-US equivalence agreement is not recognised in the UK, but will enable increases in export volumes, as well as improvements in efficiency of haulage and processing for Omsco.

This new standard may come as a concern to some farmers, where antibiotics have been relied on to treat many health issues, especially clinical mastitis. Under the PWAB standard, once a cow has been treated with antibiotics, some farmers will opt to keep them in the herd until the end of their lactation and then sell them on to a non-organic herd, with their milk being used to feed calves once the antibiotic withdrawal period has passed. Alternatively, these animals will be sold post-recovery. Depending on the incidence of mastitis in the herd, it could be a challenge to maintain herd size (replacement rate will increase) and hence milk output under these new rules.

Some cows can self-cure from mastitis, but this can depend on the type of bacteria causing the infection and successful recovery can be aided with fluid therapy, anti-inflammatories and alternative/herbal treatments. In addition, stripping out the infected quarter several times a day can aid recovery but there will always be some cases where antibiotics are required and the risk with the PWAB certification is that animal welfare may suffer if alternatives to antibiotics are not effective.

To comply with the PWAB standard, replacement heifers can be treated with antibiotics if required and enter the milking herd once calved, but only if it has been a minimum of 12 months since the antibiotic treatment.

With such a strict stance on the use of antibiotics, animal health planning with the vet for disease prevention must be top priority for both the milking herd and youngstock. For clinical mastitis cases, testing infected quarters to identify the main mastitis causing bugs is important to tackle the spread and administer the most appropriate treatment.

Lorna MacPherson, SAC Dairy Consultant [lorna.macpherson@sac.co.uk](mailto:lorna.macpherson@sac.co.uk)

## Pre-lambing rotation in 2022

The next few weeks will determine whether a pre-lambing rotation will be feasible. If you can manage it, it provides good quality nutrition to the ewes in pregnancy and spring pasture production increases. Grazing off the winter dormant leaf encourages the grass to produce more leaf and this new leaf is better quality. If you have over 7cm average across your lambing or turnout area, it is worth grazing pre lambing. Some guidance below:

- When: March
- Stock: all is possible or prioritise those that will benefit the most from good nutrition: lean, gimmers, triplets
- Duration: Around 35 days
- Pre-graze target: 1500kg DM/ha (5-6cm)
- Post-graze target: 1200kg DM/ha (3-4cm)
- Subsequent management: set stock in time for lambing
- Contingency, snow or wet weather: silage or hay feeding

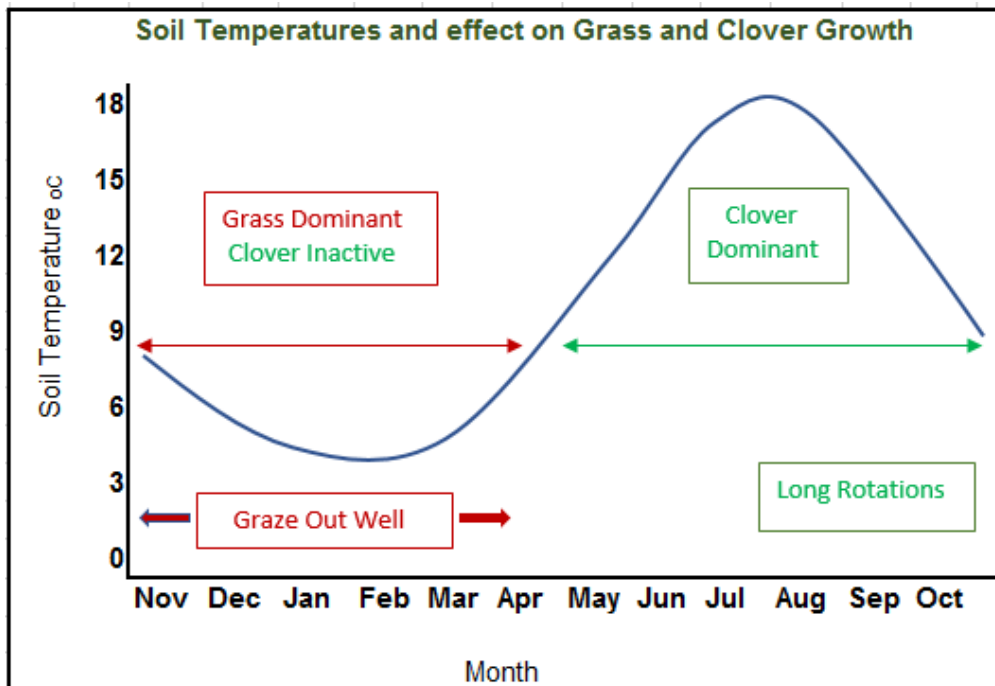
Some estimate that a pre-lambing rotation will lead to 50% more spring grass grown, so worth a shot for better grass supply in early lactation.

Poppy Frater, SAC Sheep Specialist [poppy.frater@sac.co.uk](mailto:poppy.frater@sac.co.uk)

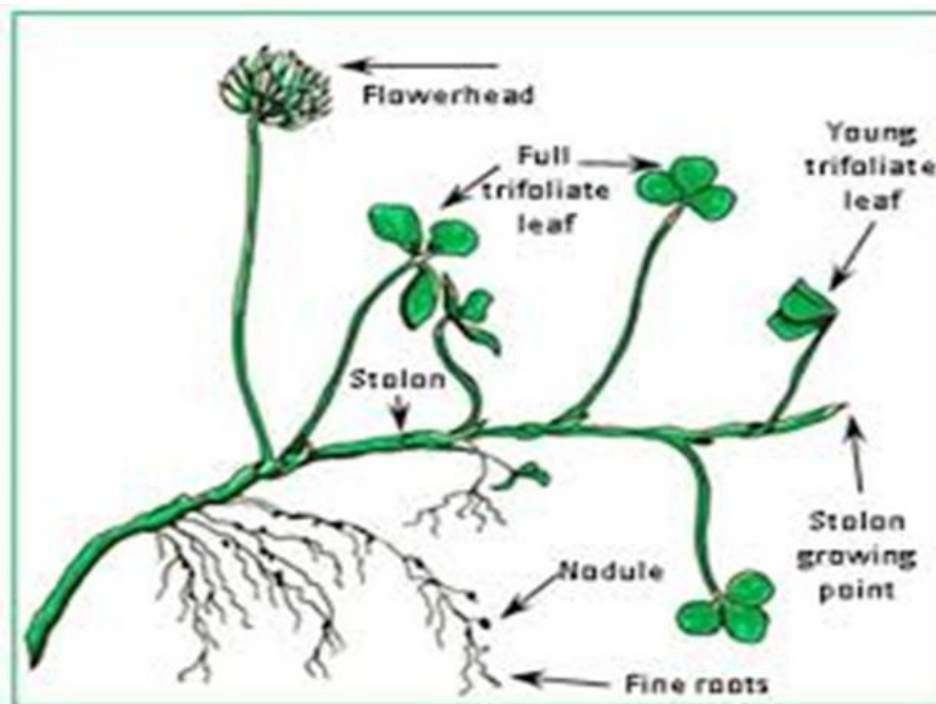
## White Clover

White clover is a perennial herbage legume which has nodules on the clover roots which are capable of converting N from the air into a plant available N through nitrogen fixation. Clover needs a higher soil temperature to start growing than grass (see chart below).

High grass covers in early Spring will shade out sunlight reaching the emerging trifoliate leaves as the temperature increases and affect nodal root development. Nodal roots are needed for longevity of the plant as these can form roots for future growth. Management in early Spring will dictate the clover growth at peak growth in mid-Summer, hence the importance of managing canopy cover in the Spring and selecting the right size of clover leaf for fields whether silage or grazing.



It is also worth noting clover likes a higher pH than grass for optimum grow and is more sensitive to phosphate and potash deficiencies.



## Top tips for establishing clover

- Optimum soil pH of 6.0-6.5
- Clover is sensitive to phosphate and potash deficiency and Moderate indices should be maintained
- Clover would be included at between 0.75-1.5kg/acre with a grass mixture to achieve target establishment
- Seeds should be sown 5-10mm deep
- Clover should be sown between April and early August to ensure the plant is producing stolons before the onset of winter
- Weed control should be managed through grazing and topping
- Grass is more competitive than clover so if establishing into an existing sward ensure the sward has been well grazed and any dead matter removed through harrowing to enable seed to soil contact
- A higher seed rate of 1.6kg/acre will be required for overseeding
- Grass will need to be managed carefully after sowing to ensure the emerging seedlings do not get shaded out.

Lorna Galloway, SAC Consulting Agricultural Consultant [lorna.galloway@sac.co.uk](mailto:lorna.galloway@sac.co.uk)

## ORC Highlights from the Oxford Real Farming Conference

<https://www.organicresearchcentre.com/news-events/news/orc-highlights-from-the-oxford-real-farming-conference/>



## Meeting

14<sup>th</sup> February

### Sustainable Sheep Systems – Spring Grazing & Fertiliser “The Proof Is In The Planning”

Time: 7:00 pm

This isn't just another webinar on high fertiliser prices!

With input prices on the rise, now is the time to assess the role of purchased inputs in your flock and what the priorities are.

Join us to hear from SAC Consulting Specialists Lorna Galloway and Poppy Frater covering a range of topics focusing on a whole system approach to get optimal benefit out of fertiliser and how to best utilise grass this Spring. They'll discuss future strategies to reduce reliance on purchased inputs which can have a multitude of benefits for your business.

Although this is not an organic meeting and fertiliser will be mentioned it should be of interest as they are looking at reducing reliance on purchased inputs.

## Improving Farm Soils

Find out more about the Soil and Nutrient Network farms which are taking a 'before and after' look at [how to protect and improve farm soils](#) and make the best use of both organic and inorganic fertilisers - saving money, benefitting yields and improving farm efficiency and resilience.

## AECS Update

As announced in December the opening and closing dates for the 2022 round have been announced. The 2022 application round will be a full round.

The scheme is now open and the main options (which includes organic conversion and maintenance) closes on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2022. There are different dates for collaborative projects, standalone slurry storage and improving public access.

The webpages have now been updated and full details can be found at [Agri-Environment Climate Scheme](#)

If you receive a 2021 round contract for part of your holding, you will not be disadvantaged if you then apply in 2022 for other parts of the holding. The 2021 contract will be taken into account when assessing your 2022 application.

Some other key points are: -

- Most agri-environment applications will require a full Farm Environment Assessment (FEA) covering the entire holding, as in the 2019 round, rather than the more restricted FEA required in 2021.
- Most agri-environment applications require one or more management plans (e.g. a moorland management plan or a grazing plan) and new plan templates have been created for the 2022 round. It is mandatory to use these and to provide all the information specified. You must provide up-to-date habitat assessments and grazing regime details.
- If applying for the Wader options, a Wader management plan must be completed. The 2022 wader plan template is a simplified version of the one used in 2021.
- If you will be preparing applications to benefit designated sites (SSSIs or European sites) or applications for deer management, you are strongly advised to contact NatureScot well in advance of preparing your application. The same applies if you require a NatureScot endorsement for an option outwith its target area.

If you have any queries, please get in touch.



## Soil Association News

**Agroforestry in Action.** Soil Association Scotland is starting 2022 with a new programme [exploring the practicalities of integrating trees on farms](#), to support more farmers, crofters and land managers to integrate trees into their systems, with practical advice to help address some of the opportunities and barriers. [Read more ...](#)

**Agroforestry: Benefits of Hedges and Riparian Buffers**, Wednesday 9 February, 7–8.30 pm. Interested in the benefits of hedges and riparian buffers? Join us in this online event to hear from experts, farmers and crofters on the benefits to land management, animal shelter, biodiversity and tackling pollution. More events to follow in March. [Read more ...](#)

**Soil Association Certification 2022 Organic Market Report: Launch Event**, Thursday 10 February, 10–11.15am  
Join us for the online launch of the 2022 Organic Market Report as we take a detailed look at the performance of organic in supermarkets, home delivery, foodservice and independent retail, as well as the latest consumer drivers shaping the market. [Read more ...](#)

**Using cover/trap crops to facilitate IPM**, Wednesday 2 February, 7–8.30pm;  
**Boosting beneficial insects on farm with an IPM approach**, Thursday 10 February, 7–8.30pm. A series of events on Integrated Pest Management. Expert advisors and farmers will share their experience and tips and then the floor will be open for your questions. [Read more ...](#)

[2022 Big Farmland Bird Count](#), 4–20 February This important initiative offers a simple means of recording the effect of any conservation schemes currently being initiated by farmers and gamekeepers on their land.

[Low input sheep health & nutrition](#), Thursday 3 February, 7–9pm, online. Share knowledge on practical ways to improve sheep health with fewer inputs in Scotland. Hear from Poppy Frater ([SAC](#)), Vic Ballantyne ([Clynelish Farm](#)) and Katharine Sharp ([Achpopuli Farm](#)) about their approaches to animal health & nutritional management.

[Soil Health for Growers](#), Tuesday 8 Feb, 7–9pm, online. Join us for an evening of discussion and skills-sharing on improving soil health for horticultural growers in Scotland. We'll be joined by soil expert Audrey Litterick (Earthcare Technical) and other guest speakers.