

An Introduction to Grassland Management



Paddy Jack
DLF Seeds Scotland

Dingwall Mart
Thursday 14th September 2017



**Farm
Advisory
Service**



New Entrants to Farming Turfs Up: An Introduction to Grassland Management



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



Venue: Dingwall & Highland
Marts Ltd IV15 9TR
Date: Thursday 14th September
Time: 3pm - 5pm

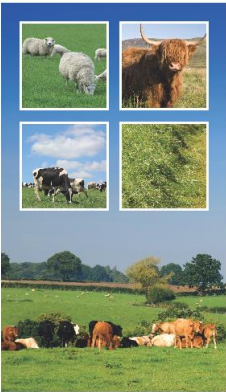
Grassland forms the foundation of many agricultural businesses and in many cases provides the most cost effective way of providing forage and feeding livestock. An efficient business should therefore pay careful attention to the needs of their grassland if they want to increase livestock carrying capacity and yields at cutting.

The bulk of the meeting will consist of an interactive workshop and provide attendees with the chance to have their own swards examined by our speaker, for that reason attendees are encouraged to bring along samples.

With guest speaker and grassland specialist, Paddy Jack.

This event is FREE and open to anyone who may be starting or taking over a farming business.

Please book onto this event through www.fas.scot or by contacting Alexander Pirie SAC Consulting Inverness on 01463 233266 or Alexander.pirie@sac.co.uk



 @FASgovt
Scottish Government
Riaghailtas na h-Alba
gov.scot

2017090400007

UK Sheep and Cattle Numbers v other EU 2015



Figure 11: Number of sheep in 2015 by EU Member State

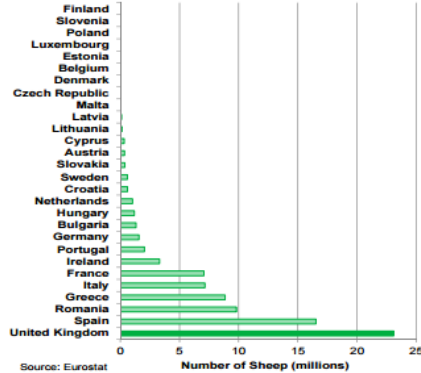
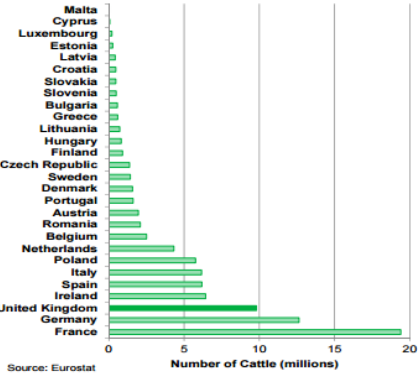
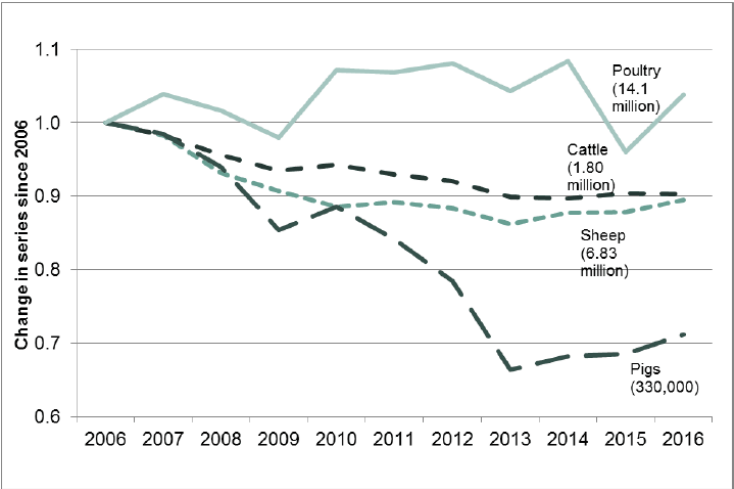


Figure 12: Number of cattle in 2015 by EU Member State



Trends in Livestock numbers Scotland



Dry Matter Production

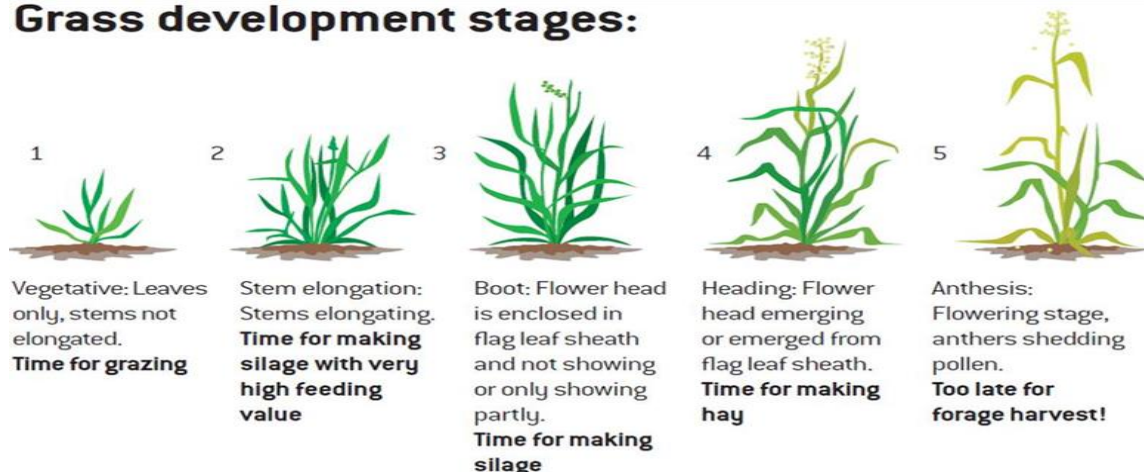


- Grazed Grass 9 to 10 tonnes DM/ha 2.5 to 4 p/kg
- Silage 13 to 15 tonnes DM/ha 9 to 13 p/kg
- Barley & Straw 7.5 + 3 tonnes DM/ha 15 to 20 p/kg (£125 del + costs)
- Consideration of Protein, ME and digestibility of fibre
- Grazed Grass is the cheapest way to feed ruminant animals

Grass Growth Stages



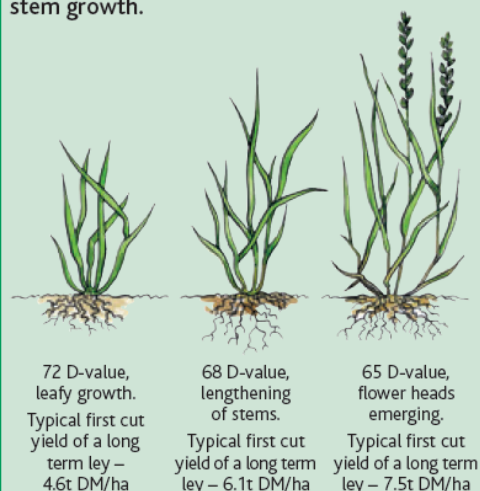
Grass development stages:



Yield of Grass (DM/Ha) v Quality in Silage



Figure 1: D-value will vary depending on leaf/stem growth.



As a grass plant gets older its

DM Yield increases

Protein and ME decrease

Lignin and Hemi-Cellulose increase

To make higher protein, higher energy silage

Cut it earlier

Ear Emergence as a quality guide for Silage



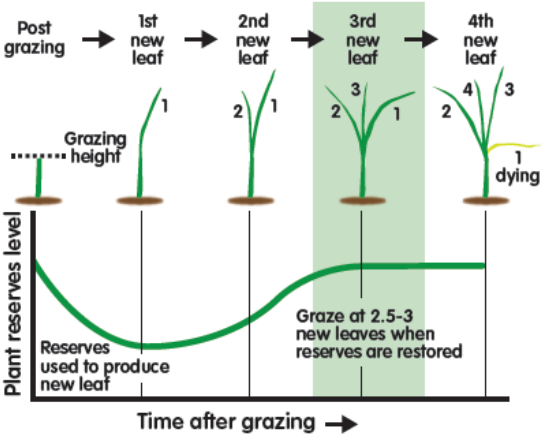
	Good	Moderate	Poor
D-value	70	65	60
% of ear emergence	25%	50%	100%
Energy ME (MJ/kg DM)	11.5	10.5	9.5
Crude protein content %	16	12	10
Feed to:	Finishing stock, ewes carrying multiples	Growing cattle, autumn-calving suckler cows, ewes carrying singles	Dry stock, spring-calving suckler cows

Key: D-value = measure of feed digestibility.

How does a grass plant grow?



Graph 1: The leaf life cycle of a grass plant



With fresh young grass it is possible to maintain an ME of over 12.0 MJ/kg DM for the whole season

Protein averages about 17% in pure ryegrass swards and about 19% with a good clover content.

Utilise grass at the correct height for the class of stock grazing it

Grazing sheep



Table 3: Sward height targets for sheep

Class of stock	Grazing period	Rotational grazing		Set stocking (cm)
		Pre-graze (cm)	Post-graze (cm)	
Ewes and lambs	Turn-out - May	8-10	4-5	4
	May - weaning	8-10	4-6	4-6
Pre-tupping	Sep - Nov	8-10	4-5	6-8
Weaned finishing lamb	Jul - Sep	10-12	5-7	6-8

Grazing cattle



Table 4: Sward height targets for beef

Class of stock	Grazing period	Rotational grazing		Set stocking (cm)
		Pre-graze (cm)	Post-graze (cm)	
Cows and calves	Turn-out - May	10-14	5-6	5-6
	June - July	12-15	7-8	7-9
	Aug - Nov	12-15	8-9	7-9
Growing/finishing	Turn-out - May	10-12	5-6	5-6
	June - July	10-14	6-7	6-7
	Aug - Nov	10-15	7-8	7-8

Benefits of Rotational Grazing

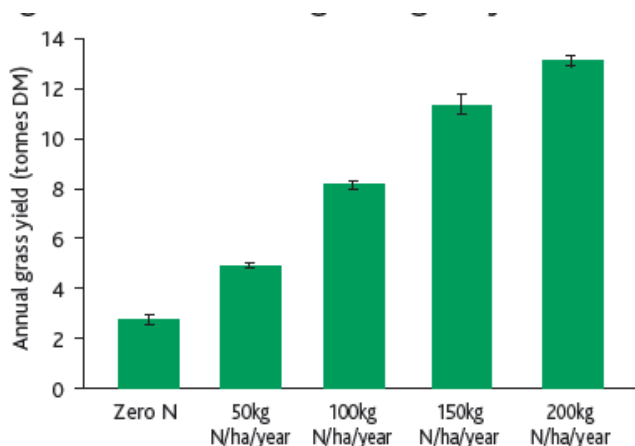


Table 5: Effect of moving from a set stocking system to paddock grazing

Strategy	Annual yield (t DM/ha)	Utilisation (%)	Useable yield (t DM/ha)	Percentage Increase
Set stocking	8.5	50	4.3	
Rotational	10.2	65	6.6	56%
Paddock	10.2	80	8.2	92%

Rotational grazing and paddock grazing do not suit all farms or farmers

Nitrogen Input



Extending the Season with Varieties



Scottish farmers very often want early growth, but without early seed heads

Use early growing intermediate perennial ryegrasses

Seagoe (T) at 111%, Glenstal at 109% and Boyne at 109% for early growth in Scottish conditions

For late season growth use the intermediate perennial ryegrasses Seagoe 110% and Boyne 107%

Or the late perennials we use like Alfonso with 109% of growth from 1st Sept and later

The late Perennial Ryegrass variety ASTONCHIEFTAIN has an REE of 52

This means its first seed heads aren't seen until 22nd June

It has 109% of early growth and 104% for late autumn growth

Use SRUC recommended varieties



Extending the season with Species



For really early production there are several options

Early Perennial Ryegrass

Timothy	Thrives on cold, wet, high land
Cocksfoot	Hard to manage, does well on very sandy land
Festuloliums	Stress tolerant, early, high yielding

Festuloliums are crosses between ryegrasses and fescues. They occur naturally in the wild

Tolerant of drought and water logging and very clean

Perseus 17th April 58 cm tall



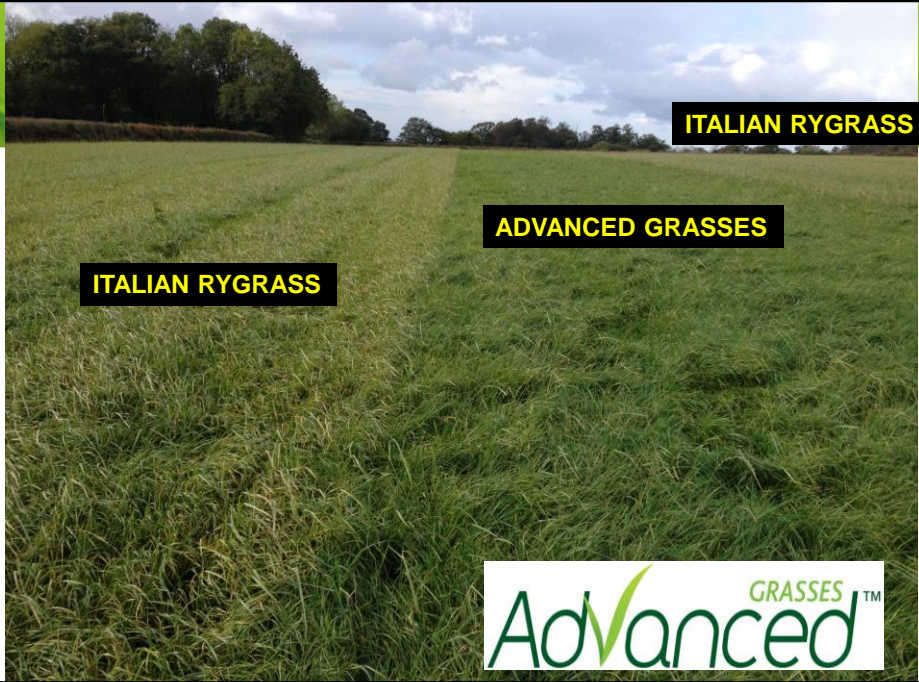
Perseus is a FESULOLIUM
It is a cross between
Italian Ryegrass and tall Fescue

It will last 3 years
Is very Stress Tolerant (big roots)
Disease free

Hybrid Ryegrass on the LHS V Perseus on the RHS



At DLF Seeds we call
Festuloliums



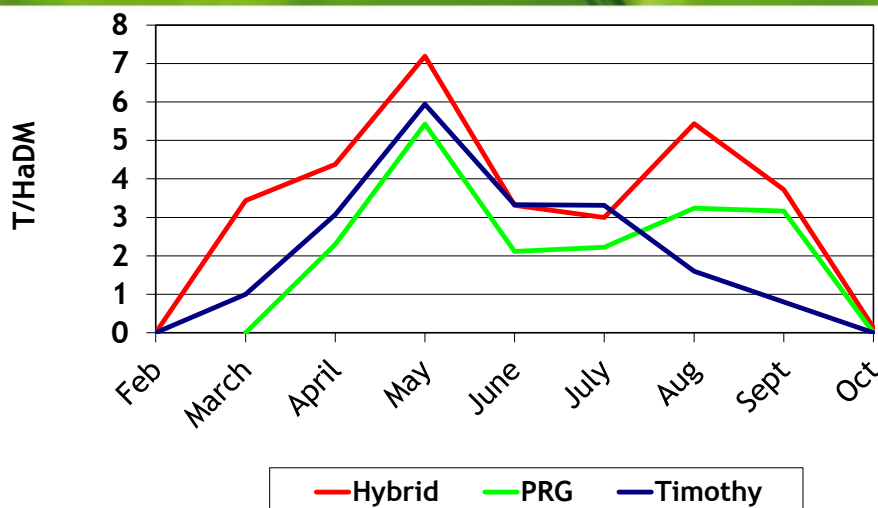
ITALIAN RYGRASS

ADVANCED GRASSES

ITALIAN RYGRASS



Seasonal Growth Patterns



Why use Mixtures



- No single perfect grass variety (or often species) for all situations
- Utilize differences in the components, ie. clover and grass, early and late heading etc.
- Buffer weaknesses
- Areas are often heterogeneous and a mixture can adapt more widely: E.g. some parts of a field with dry soil some parts more exposed to water etc.
- Higher security in case of failure
- Complementary in time and space (persistence)

Grass Mixture Components



- Perennial Ryegrass
 - Early Perennial Ryegrass
 - Intermediate Perennial Ryegrass
 - Late Perennial Ryegrass
- Italian Ryegrass
- Hybrid Ryegrass
- Timothy
- Cocksfoot
- Creeping Red Fescue
- White Clover
- Red Clover
- Advanced Grasses - Festuloliums

What do Scottish farmers want?



- Generally a medium term dual purpose mixture
- Proven brands
- Very dense and hard wearing
- Winter hardy
- High quality varieties
- Often 5% to 7% of white clover inclusion
- All SAC varieties
- Sow at 14 to 15 kg/acre



Options with Grass and Clover



- Direct sow a full Mixture on its own
- Direct sow a full mixture with Westerwolds
- Undersow a spring cereal or wholecrop/ arable silage
- Overseed existing grass sward **ProNitro®** seed treatment
- Other options

Westerwolds



DLF currently have
11,000 breeding lines
On Westerwolds alone



Undersown Cereals / Wholecrops

Where grass establishment is the paramount consideration



- **Undersow a spring cereal which is to be combined**
 - Reduce the cereal seed rate from normal levels
 - Reduce the Nitrogen content by about 25 kg/ha
 - Remove straw swaths as soon as possible
 - Keep clean from weeds and diseases
- **Undersow an arable silage or cereal mixture for the forager**
 - Do not be tempted by high contents of broad leaved crops
 - Cut about 4 to 4 ½ weeks prior to “Combining date” - cereals at soft cheese
- Improve your vermin controls

Overseeding



- Quick, easy, lower cost and can be very effective
- No production gap
- Limited sowing window under cutting but more flexibility under grazing
- Not an instant fix and several months before full benefits are realised
- Overseeding has massive potential to improve grassland performance provided conditions are right
- Ideal way to increase clover levels in an existing sward
- Overseeding is **ALWAYS** a compromise

Wire Tine Machines



Thick Tines Aggressive Action



Many other Grass drills available



Grain Drills



Very successful at re-introducing clover

ProNitro® Seed treatment



Lincolnshire
2015

Red Clover



- Produces 4 times the yield of white clover (13 tonnes DM /ha)
- Cutting species which will die out under constant grazing
- Lifespan of 3 - 4 years
- Grown for high yields of high protein silage and superb aftermath grazing
- Will cut up to 4 times a year with autumn grazing
- Avoid grazing with breeding animals before and after tugging due to oestrogen content



Red Clover Silage - Typical



Digestibility	60 - 70%
Dry Matter Yield	10 - 15 tonnes DM /ha (4 - 6 tonnes DM/acre)
Dry Matter	25 - 30%
Fresh Yield	40 - 60 tonnes/ha (16 - 25 tonnes/acre)
Crude Protein	15 - 20%
Energy (ME)	10.0 - 11.5 MJ/kg DM

Perennial Chicory



- 3 ½ to 4 years life
- Included in mixtures at 0.75 kg/acre
- Sown on its own at 2 to 3 kg/acre
- Mixed with clover and/or plantains
 - 2 kgs white clover
 - 1.75 kgs chicory
 - 0.25 kg ribwort plantain
- It is a herb and must have a rest
- Slight anthelmintic property
- Very palatable
- CHOICE Chicory

Lucerne for northern UK



- The best results with LUCERNE are achieved in Scotland when...
 - Free draining soil
 - Good pH status
 - It is not damaged too much by traffic or hard grazing
 - The 1st cut in the establishment year is often a "weed control" silage
- Drill at 8 to 10 kg/acre of inoculated seed, broadcast a little more (10°C min)
- Harvest at mid to late bud and then every 40 days
- Expect about 16 tonnes fresh/acre (3.4 tonnes DM/acre)
- 16 to 18% protein; 10.5 ME
- Supposed to last 5 years - in reality about 3 ½ years



Forage Rape



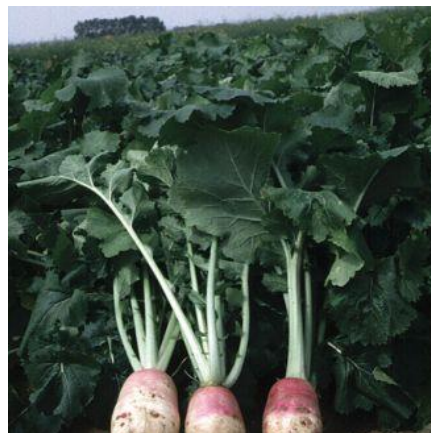
- Very fast growing
- More tolerant of low fertility
- Wide spectrum of use
 - Spring sow for mid summer
 - June/ early August for autumn
- Highly palatable
- Suits both sheep and cattle
- Superb for finishing lambs
- Sow mid June to mid July
- Drill at 2.5 kg/acre
- Broadcast at 4 - 5 kg/acre
- Some varieties can be flea beetle treated



Stubble Turnips



- Palatable and digestible
- Can be utilised 10 to 12 weeks after sowing
- Cattle or sheep
- Bulb or leafy type
- Not winter hardy
- Sow mid July to mid August
- Sow after winter barley
- Or after 2nd cut silage
- Drill at 2 kg/acre
- Broadcast at 3 kg/acre



Avalon Leafy Turnip



- Very high early vigour - covers the ground quickly
- 1.2 to 3 kg/acre
- 50 kg/ha N 15 kg/ha P and K
- Good winter hardiness and alternaria resistance
- Tap or “pen” root - not a bulb
- Very leafy and can be grazed from 6 weeks
- Where it has been sown in Scotland in autumn 2016 it has been superb



Kale



- A leafy, high yielding brassica
- Can be used right through both autumn and winter
- High protein and palatable
- Cattle and sheep can use it
- Sow mid May to June
- Needs good conditions
 - pH, phosphate & nitrogen
- Drill at 2 kg/acre
- Broadcast at 3 kg/acre
- Can be flea beetle treated



A good crop of Maris Kestrel
Berwickshire September 2014

Hybrid Brassicas



Spitfire
Digestible Stems



Zoom
Multiple Harvests

Swedes



- Full season crop
- Tolerant of most frosts
- High yielding
- Generally fed in situ
- Can be lifted and stored
- High dry matter for longer life
- pH sensitive
- They “clean” the ground
- Drill end April and May
- Very low sowing rates
 - 125 to 300 grams/acre precision
 - 1 to 2 kg/acre with grain drill
- All flea beetle treated



Fodder Beet - can they be grown in Scotland?



1000 tonnes off 25 acres
EnnerMax Beet
Kelso Nov 2015

Huge yields
High ME
Can be stored or fed in situ
Lift from Oct to Feb

Weed control is CRITICAL!!

BANGOR Grazing Fodder Beet



- 20.7 Tonnes DM/hectare
 - 110 tonnes/ha + fresh wt.
 - 4 to 5 Tonnes DM also in tops
 - 17.7% Dry Matter
 - 80% sits out of the ground
 - Clean (3.3% dirt)
 - Yellow
 - Best Grazing fodder beet
 - 10% Yield advantage over Kyros
-
- £70.00 per 50,000 seed pack (approx. 1 acre)



Ecological Focus Areas - Opportunities in 2018



- **Fallow Land** EFAFAL Not used from 15th January to 15th July, inclusively
 - Sow a late heading grass mixture specifically for cutting in mid July
 - 2016 15 Tonnes/hectare silage at 11.2 ME and 14 Protein (Fans, Earlston)
- **Margins** EFAM May be cut for hay or silage, after 15th July
 - May also be grazed after 15th July if not beside or containing a watercourse
- **Catch Crop** EFACC Undersow a spring cereal crop
 - Use a full grass mixture if leaving the field in grass for longer
 - Use an Italian Catch Crop Mixture at 3 to 4 kg/acre
- **Green Cover** EFAGC Improve the organic matter and physical conditions of a soil
 - Mixtures with vetches, forage rye, phacelia, mustard, red and white clover, radishes