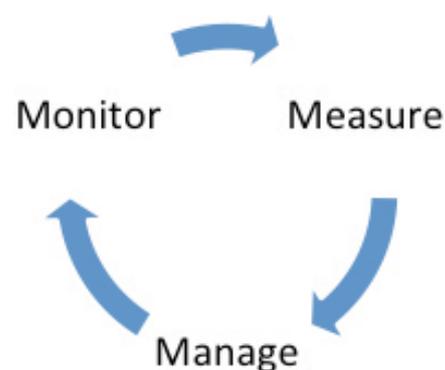


ACT EARLY - Measure, Manage and Monitor Forage

The fantastic autumn weather has been a big help in bridging the forage deficit. There have been more pits filled, silage bales wrapped, and further to this, excellent grazing conditions have delayed the feeding of silage. However, it is very important not to become complacent with regard to managing silage stocks for the winter ahead. The National Fodder Survey completed in September showed that over 50% of farmers in the southern counties have a silage deficit of approximately 22%. Some of the gap has been filled

with the sowing and utilisation of catch crops, along with good conditions to harvest maize and grass silage but on a lot of intensively stocked dairy and beef farms there is still a shortage of fodder. Our estimates are that there is an average of 15% shortage on most of our farms. Think back to the stress of Spring 2018 when weather conditions were not favourable and silage stocks were running out fast; if action is taken immediately when animals are housed it will be possible to stretch silage stocks.



Example Farm

A dairy or suckler farmer with 100 cows, 30 weanlings and 30 in-calf heifers will require 1100 tons of silage for 5 months. If the farmer is short 15% that equates to a staggering 165 tons of silage that is not in the yard and will have to be sourced elsewhere. Approximately 40 extra tons of concentrate feed will be required on this farm.

Action Plan for Surviving with Limited Silage

MEASURE

- Measure all silage pits and count bales of silage, hay and straw available for feeding. Also do a count on extra feed that will be available on the farm e.g. fodder beet, zero grazed grass, forage rape.
- Get silage pits cored and tested. A few silage samples may cost €100 but this is a small price to pay for accurate information on feeding value when there could be €20,000 worth of silage in the pit. Brett's have over 100 silage samples tested and the range in dry matter of pit silage is 18% to 62%, so it is crucial that pits are tested before opening.

MANAGE

- Manage supply of fodder versus the demand required by planning for a realistic number of months that silage is required (mid November- end of March is 4.5 months). This will vary depending on land type and typical turn out date. We recommend allowing a further two weeks as a buffer stock for potential adverse weather conditions in spring. The worst case is that you will be left with silage in the yard in spring 2019 when all the stock are at grass; this would be a bonus!

- Count all stock to be fed and use the following allocation of silage (fresh weight) to calculate the amount required per month depending on animal type and silage dry matter as outlined in Table 1.
- Contact your Brett Ruminant Support Specialist (Michael Foley or David Lawrence) or Sales Rep who will use your farm details to complete a fodder budget and advise you on options available for your specific situation.
- If you have to restrict silage (e.g. 25 kgs per day to dry cows) get an accurate weighing on what a grab of pit silage weighs so that you will be able to manage silage stocks. Obviously if you have a diet feeder you will be able to manage silage fed more precisely.

MONITOR

- At the end of every month make a point of doing a quick appraisal of silage still available. It's easier to correct an over-usage in early January than discover it in mid-March when it is too late.
- Monitor performance of livestock by reviewing milk yield and solids, weight gain on weanlings and body condition of dry cows.

Table 1 Silage requirements per month depending on Dry matter of silage

Animal Type	Fresh tons of silage/month at 20% DM silage	Fresh tons of silage/month at 25% DM silage
Dairy Cows	1.6	1.3
Suckler Cows	1.4	1.1
Weanlings	0.7	0.56
1-2 yr old	1.3	1.0

Brett's Winter Feed Forums

Brett Brothers are hosting a number of Dry Cow and Weanling Winter Feed Forums, as a means of providing dairy and beef farmers with sound practical advice for managing this winter's feed challenges.

Titled 'Practical Feed Solutions to the Winter Challenges Ahead', according to Brett's Technical Manager, Heather Peppard, "a lack of good winter feed planning is the most pressing issue that will face farmers this winter, and we are aiming to support farmers by giving them the opportunity to meet with the Brett's Ruminant Support Specialists, and discuss issues that directly relate to their dairy or beef farm."

Topics to be addressed include; Dry cow nutrition management for dairy and suckler cows, achieving targets for weanlings and yearlings with limited silage, and practical solutions to feed budgeting.



The forums will take place as follows:

Waterford / South Kilkenny Tuesday 6 th November Rhu Glen Hotel, Slieverue	11.30 AM
Kilkenny Wednesday 7 th November Springhill Hotel, Kilkenny	11.30 AM
Tipperary Thursday 8 th November Hotel Minella, Clonmel	7.45 PM
Laois Tuesday 13 th November Manor Hotel, Abbeyleix	7.45 PM

For more information contact the Callan Office on 056 7755300
 Find us on Facebook
www.brettbrothers.ie

PRODUCT FOCUS

Brett's PIP Dry Cow Minerals



Dry Cow Minerals are crucial to ensuring that dry cows get the appropriate mineral and nutritional components for a successful calving and stress-free start to lactation. Brett's PIP Dry Cow Mineral is a highly effective mineral with the appropriate balance of minerals and vitamins to boost immunity of the new born calf and the freshly calved cow. The incidence of problems such as retained afterbirth, milk fever, stillborn calves can be reduced greatly if cows receive appropriate dry cow nutrition. It is essential that minerals are fed to ensure all cows get the correct amount so if feeding space is limited we suggest feeding minerals twice per day. For a brochure please visit our website or contact the office.

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