



Spring 2022 - Managing Grass & Forage

The challenge this spring is to plan for efficient use of fertiliser to ensure there is sufficient grass available when there is peak demand from grazing livestock. Use soil samples to make best use of slurry and plan fertiliser use accordingly.

This spring is starting off with very high grass covers on some farms and at present grazing conditions are favourable, but, as we all know this can change quickly. Livestock farms need to have a flexible plan for grazing and there are a number of influencing factors which affect this.

- **Weather** is a critical factor. Don't sacrifice animal performance or paddocks if the weather is against you, this will only slow down your next grazing rotation.
- **Soil Type**, cold soils will take longer to reach the grass growth required to support herd demand, so think of **your own farm** when deciding on a spring strategy.
- **Consistency**, once grass is in the diet work your budget to try and keep it in the diet, just getting out for 3-4 hours is enough to get the benefits of grass.
- **Opening Covers** are variable this year, so it's worth walking the farm to see how much grass you are starting off with.
- **Transition** dairy cows to grass slowly after calving. Grass is a high protein, highly digestible, energy rich feed, which is the complete opposite to average silage results, so transition slowly to avoid digestive upsets by keeping some silage in the diet.
- **Budget** your grass every week or fortnight, and budget your silage on the same day. Some farms may have low fodder reserves so review stocks on your farm frequently.

Common Causes of Retained Afterbirth and Slow Calving

If a cow has not expelled the afterbirth within 24 hours of birth, there are a few reasons as to the possible cause. If cows are 'slow' to calve or are 'lazy' this is also linking to a higher incidence of retained afterbirths. The fallout from retained cleanings are uterine infections and poor reproductive performance leading to vet call outs.

- Twin births have an increased prevalence.
- Poor immune status due to vitamin and trace mineral deficiency such as vitamin E, selenium, zinc and iodine.
- Dehydration - cows loose over 20 litres of fluid during calving and every cow should be offered a large bucket of clean, warm water or post calving drink straight after calving. Brett's stock Reviva as a post calving drink.
- Calcium is required for muscle contractions and if there is insufficient calcium in the blood the cow's uterus may stop functioning and she may not expel the afterbirth.

Congratulations

We would like to congratulate our young farmer clients Eoin Kennedy from Kilkenny and Trevor Cobbe from Laois who were category winners in the recent FBD Young Farmer of the Year Awards. Eoin won the Land Mobility Award and Trevor was presented with the Dairy Award.

TOP TIP

Take time to budget grass and calculate silage stocks in the yard.



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How much to feed and what to feed?

Concentrate feeding levels should not be set in stone but reactive to increasing herd demand, weather and your overall forage budget. Table 1 outlines recommended feeding levels depending on forage available and milk yield. Do not overestimate grass dry matter intakes, freshly calved cows need to transition to grass slowly, and silage should still make up some of the diet to achieve good dry matter intakes.

Table 1: Recommended concentrate supplementation depending on forage type and supply

Forage Available	What Dairy Cube to feed	Milk Yield		
		22 Litres	26 Litres	30 Litres
Indoors fulltime on 70% DMD silage	Milkwell 18 Milk Max 18	6.5 Kgs	7.5 Kgs	8.5 Kgs
Indoors fulltime on 65% DMD silage	Milkwell 18 Milk Max 18	7.5 Kgs	8.5 Kgs	9.5 Kgs
Grass by day (6 kg DM) Ad lib 70% DMD silage by night	Milkwell 18 Milk Max 18 PIP Spring Dairy 16 Ultra Dairy 16	5.5 Kgs	6.5 Kgs	7.5 Kgs
Grass by day (6 kg DM) Ad lib 65% DMD silage by night	Milkwell 18 Milk Max 18 PIP Spring Dairy 16 Ultra Dairy 16	6.5 Kgs	7.5 Kgs	8.5 Kgs

This table gives an approximate guideline, for detailed recommendations contact your local Ruminant Support Specialist.



PIP SPRING DAIRY 16



Flexibility of feed in terms of feeding levels and protein is the key to managing freshly calved cows on silage and grass diets. Brett's PIP Spring Dairy is specifically formulated to complement spring grass while giving the flexibility in feeding rates of 3.5-8 kgs depending on grass availability, grazing conditions and silage quality. Our unique Performance Improvement Pack (PIP) is also included in the dairy cubes, and this provides essential minerals and additives for boosting the immunity of the cow in early lactation. This dairy cube is the perfect transition feed between our flagship Milkwell 18% and Maxi Breeder 14%.



February Photo Competition

We are looking for the best photo that depicts the Spring of 2022 on your farm. The winner will receive a One4All voucher.

Follow Brett Brothers Limited on Facebook for details of how to enter our photo competition or email photos@brettbrothers.ie.



February Special Offer – Ultra Calf Cubes

€50 off orders of bulk calf feed over 3 tons
OR receive 2 bags FREE with every full pallet
(minimum order 56 bags/1.4 tons) ordered.

Valid until 28th February 2022.



Brett Brothers Ltd.,
Callan, Co. Kilkenny
Tel: 056 7755300

Brett Brothers Ltd.,
Windgap, Co. Kilkenny
Tel: 051 648204

Brett Brothers Ltd.,
Ardfinnan, Co. Tipperary
Tel: 052 7466208

Brett Brothers Ltd.,
Portlaw, Co. Waterford
Tel: 051 387396

www.brettbrothers.ie

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