



Dealing with Grass Shortages on Livestock Farms

The Brett's Ruminant Support Team have been out and about on grassland farms and are seeing **soil moisture deficits** having an impact on grass growth. This does vary between areas, even within the same parish! Many farmers are starting to cast their minds back to 2018 and everyone hopes that there will be some decent rainfall by mid-June to keep grass growing. The most important piece of advice for farmers is to walk the farm regularly, measure grass, keep an eye on the forecast and seek advice in a bid to intervene early.

- Start to stretch out the available grass covers that are suitable for grazing (>1000 kg DM/ha) so grass remains in the diet as long as possible, while awaiting the required rainfall.
- Try to postpone grazing covers <800 kg DM/ha if possible as these will respond well when the rain comes.
- Offer good quality silage as a simple way of reducing grass demand. One bale of silage fed to 40-45 head of cattle or cows is approximately 5 kg DM of forage/head.
- Dairy farmers should ensure that the parlour feed has a flexible feed rate and increase feed levels in the parlour to reduce grass demand.
- Drystock farmers should offer baled silage or hay in the field and consider introducing a supplement to extend the grazing rotation,

especially forward cattle or lambs that are near factory fit.

- In 2018, we noted that a lot of calves were fed high levels of concentrates and no additional forage, so please discuss a plan with your Technical Sales Representative. Straw should be offered when feed levels increase.
- If a mineral bolus has been given to any class of stock, please check what the maximum feed rate is permitted in conjunction with additional minerals.
- Where there is limited availability of baled silage, consider using Brett's Grass Stretcher Ration, which is a high fibre, 15% protein ration that can be fed safely at higher volumes up to 6 kg/head/day to complement parlour feeding and limited grass/forage.



TOP TIP

TIP for dairy farmers is to ensure the parlour concentrate is suitable for higher feeding levels. Brett's have a range of dairy cubes formulated for flexible feeding rates. However, if there are high levels of silage in the diet or other low protein feeds, such as soya hulls, the protein in the parlour feed may need to be increased to offset the loss of protein that is normally provided in grass.

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Can I feed more than 15% protein in dairy feed if short of grass?

Farmers are aware that the maximum level of protein permitted when all of the forage is from grass is 15% for this year. However, if there is an alternative forage other than grass introduced and it is deemed necessary to supplement with extra protein, there is an allowance for this under the Welfare Guidelines of the derogation rule. Your advisor or Brett's Technical Team can sign off on this at the end of the year when submitting the derogation records.

What to feed to replacement heifers?

Brett's Heifer Rearer Cubes are carefully formulated with the sole purpose of growing replacement heifers to achieve target weights. This is the ideal follow on feed to Brett's Ultra Calf Cubes. A good heifer rearing programme improves the overall longevity of the replacement stock joining the herd. Research has shown that high protein diets promote good mammary development and prevent fatty tissue depositing in the udder, thus maximising future milking ability. Brett's Heifer Rearer Cubes contains high levels of calcium and phosphorus to encourage bone growth and development, helping the foundation frame of the future cow and encouraging the onset of puberty and reproductive cycling.

PRODUCT FOCUS

New Product – Maxi Grow Calf Cubes 17%

Our new calf feed **Maxi Grow Calf Cubes** are ideal as a follow on to Brett's Ultra Calf Cubes if feeding a mix of heifers and bulls or bull calves only. These 17% cubes are suitable for weaned calves that are at least 10 weeks of age. This feed is carefully formulated and well balanced with phosphorus and calcium - minerals that are essential for development of skeletal frame. This feed is available in bulk or bags.



Grass Watch and Milk Urea

With the excellent weather and good grass growth in May, there has been a great opportunity to take out surplus paddocks for silage. It is important that every farm completes a Fodder Budget for the winter ahead and plans to have a reserve of silage to replace the depleted stocks from the past 6 months.

Our weekly **Grass Watch** sampling is showing that grass proteins are running lower than the 5 year average. This may be related to lower levels of nitrogen being spread on grazing ground. Grass crude protein levels have increased slightly over the last week from 20% to 21%, which is an improvement from the decrease in grass crude protein levels we have noticed in early May. Despite this, crude protein levels of grass this week have been seen as low as 14.8% and as high as 26.1%.

With the dry weather we are experiencing at the minute, which is forecasted to remain for the next week, grass could be experiencing some drought stress. If areas are very dry, nitrogen uptake may be restricted, which will also have an effect on grass crude protein levels.

Many customers are reporting that their **milk urea** levels are below the optimum levels of early 20s and we have seen milk urea remain on the lower side of 15. Low milk urea (<15) indicates that there is a borderline shortage of protein. If the dry spell results in less grass being in the diet or the protein of that grass falling, then additional protein may be required.



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