



Iverk Show 2026 - 200th Year Anniversary

We were delighted to welcome so many customers to our stand at the Iverk Show and to spend time catching up over a cup of tea. It was a delight to see many of our customers exhibiting livestock with great success in the showing. This year's event was particularly special as the show celebrated 200 years, marking an incredible milestone in its long and proud history.

As Ireland's oldest agricultural show, the Iverk Show continues to hold a special place in the agricultural calendar. We would like to recognise the show's hard-working committee, whose dedication and tireless efforts behind the scenes ensure the continued success of this much-loved event year after year.

A challenging time

The summer of 2026 will be remembered by the farming community in the South East as one of the most challenging years. It has been a stressful few months with the lack of rain and it is a welcome sight to see rain gauges back in use with significant rainfall in recent days.

With high levels of silage having been fed and currently still required on most farms the concern moves to fodder supplies this winter. The supply of fodder is extremely variable from farm to farm and from our farm visits deficits range from as low as 10% to greater than 50%. Do not ignore doing the sums – seek advice as we are able to help you determine if there is sufficient silage available for the livestock you have to feed. We encourage everyone to complete a fodder budget and get silage tested in order to help make timely decisions. All livestock farmers should still strive to produce more silage where grass growth permits.

A lot of lessons were learnt from 2018 and we know that if you have at least 75% of your forage requirements (grass silage, wholecrop, maize silage, hay, straw) it will be possible to fill the gap with concentrates but it needs a carefully planned feed budget from now until next spring. If you have less than 75% of your forage requirements it will be necessary to continue to source or produce more silage.

SILAGE - Know what you have and how much you have

Now is the time to focus on feed available for the winter ahead. It is critical to assess silage quality and to determine if you have enough silage available.

Quality – Silage between pits is often variable and this year is no different. One farmer had three pits ranging from 24 % to 33.0% of Dry Matter (DM). It is fair to say that a lot of silage is very dry (25- 30% Dry matter) but unfortunately in many cases the Dry Matter Digestibility (DMD) is less than 70%. With many yards potentially short of silage we recommend testing silage sooner rather than later to make calculated decisions on concentrate feeding requirements.

If silage is being fed to dry cows, request a mineral analysis of your silage. This is a small price to pay to get ahead of problems such as milk fever, retained cleanings and stillborn calves, all of which are preventable with targeted mineral nutrition and good dry cow management.

Budget Silage – These past few months silage stocks have been depleted and even with restored soil moisture deficits the opportunity to make more silage dwindles with a shorter growing day. Plan for the worst-case scenario of a late spring and having to feed silage until April. If you want to calculate the amount of silage available against stock requirements, please contact any member of the Brett Brothers team.

What are the Options to Fill the Gap?

We would advise that every farmer needs to do what is manageable for their own farm. The main message is to 'keep it simple'. The priority is to get grass back in the diet and to conserve silage for the winter.

In August Bretts supplied enough Forage Stretcher to equate to approximately 5000 bales of silage. Our Stretcher Rations are available at a very competitive price. Contact your Bretts Sales Representative for further advice.

Bretts Forage Stretcher Ration 16% is formulated to include raw materials that will help to fill the gap of a portion of fodder and stretch the supplies that are in your yard. It includes no minerals and is suitable for dry cows, milking cows, in-calf heifers and cattle over 6 months of age and is recommended to introduce at 2 kgs/animal/day and increase to a maximum of 5 kgs/animal/day.

Bretts Hi-Fibre Ration 18% has been specifically formulated to complement parlour feeding and support the dairy cows' diet during challenging conditions where additional supplementation is needed. This ration is designed to help protect milk yields and milk solids with the aim of maintaining cow performance. This ration includes highly digestible sources of fibre, blended with starch. It has no added minerals or no additional magnesium which allows it to be fed at a flexible feed rate. It is recommended to introduce at 2 kgs/animal/day and increase to a maximum of 6 kgs/animal/day.

HUGE SAVING

For every 10 tons of Stretcher Ration used on a farm it will save approximately 40 bales of silage or 35 tons of pit silage at 25% dry matter.



Pictured above is Brett's Hi Fibre Ration 18%



Ad-lib feeding of beef animals

The drought conditions have resulted in many finishing cattle being housed earlier than normal. Due to the shortage of fodder, there will be a lot of cattle being targeted for intensive finishing. During the transitional feeding period of approximately 3 weeks the level of concentrate increases gradually while the amount of silage or forage is reduced. This is a challenging period with the risk that rumen pH drops and causes acidosis but with excellent management and the correct selection of feed cattle will settle into high feeding rates very quickly.

Tips for a stress-free transitional period to ad-libitum feeding:

- Do not overstock pens and bear in mind that the animals will get bigger while in these pens. Animals need adequate feeding and lying space.
- Intensively fed animals perform better on straw bedded sheds but the majority of beef animals are housed on slats. If available pen animals on rubber slats.
- Check water supply daily and clean out drinkers.
- It is vital that there is good ventilation and air movement in the shed. Clipping a strip of hair up the back can reduce 'sweating' of animals in the shed.
- For the first few days after housing animals offer an abundance of silage and straw, this allows the rumen bugs to acclimatise to an indoor diet.
- Select a feed that is suitable for ad-lib feeding. In Bretts we firmly believe in the use of feed additives in conjunction with careful raw material selection. Acid Buff and Actisaf Yeast are proven to maintain rumen pH, reducing the risk of acidosis, loose dung and subsequent lameness.
- Introduce feed at no more than 3 kgs per head per day and make sure every animal can get to the trough. As a rule of thumb increase the feed rate by 1 kg every third day and once you get to 5 kgs feed cattle twice a day. Continue to offer an unlimited supply of good quality forage; grass silage and straw are ideal. As concentrate levels increase the volume of forage eaten will decline.
- Discuss your system with a member of the Bretts technical team.

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