

DN NEWSLETTER

issue 04

Following the very dry spring, grass is starting to appear and for many turn out time is here. This week's issue will look at how the dairy sector has been affecting milk producers; options for beef cattle to maximise returns; the weekly grass growth update and a couple of products to consider for summer.

We have pulled out a few pointers from 'IP – Dairy Farmer – May 2020' which we thought might be of interest:

The problem in April was simple: dairy processors could not convert or divert cancelled foodservice orders into the retail sector.

Spot milk very briefly fell to 5ppl, which meant if a processor was willing to collect milk from another processor it was free. The surplus milk was compared to taking finished lambs to market knowing there were no buyers with the farmer unable to take them back to the farm. Consequently, some farmers were told to dump milk with less than 24 hours' notice because there was no plan B outlet.

Immediately after Easter there were signs of light at the end of the tunnel, and they came on as quick as the lights were switched off 10 days earlier.

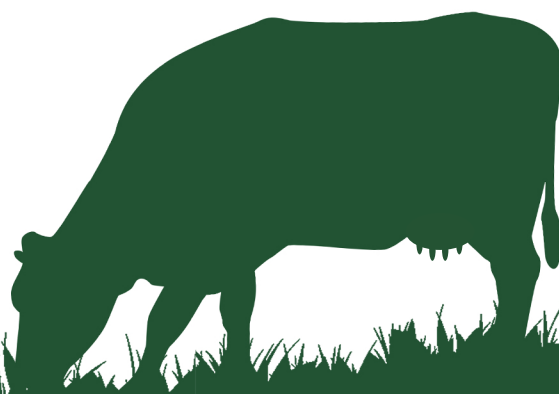
No one predicted the unforeseen consequences of COVID19 on the fresh milk business and less than a handful of struggling liquid buyers appeared to have only one solution - to solve the problem by instantly passing all the pain down to supplying farmers. That, though, is no surprise given some fresh milk processors lost so much money in 2018/19 that they were treading water with no financial reserves.

The biggest problem farmers fear is not how low the milk price drops to, but for how long it remains low. My crystal ball indicates any farmgate milk price drops will bottom out by June/July and I believe the industry passed its low point during the first 7 to 10 days of April as the panic distressed milk vanished as quickly as it arrived. Let's hope I am right.

Smart processors quickly adjusted to the crisis and found ways to mitigate the problem. For me, the Muller approach was instant, limited in its pain, fair and a good solution to what was and is a relatively short-term challenge. It is a great example of the industry sorting its own challenges rather than bleating to Government.

Several responsible processors appear to be concerned that drastic moves by farmers now will result in a serious milk shortage in the Autumn. They are taking a long view and appear to be behaving responsibly and whilst they want production pulled back a bit, they know milk will be needed in the second half of this year.

Miranda Sutton



Grass Growth and Nutrient Values.

Last week saw a slight increase of grass growth however not as great as the grass growth in 2019 which may be due to the lack of rain April has had. Hopefully we will get more rain to help grass growth in the coming weeks. The energy in the grass is fractionally lower this week but the protein has increased considerably.

Grass growth (kg DM/ha)	62.3
Dry matter (%)	20.0
Metabolisable Energy (MJ/kg DM)	12.6
Crude Protein (%)	23.3

Efficiency of Prime Stock is Key.

Now more than ever, the efficiency of prime beef is key for profits. The price of prime stock is leaving tight margin, it is important to keep ruminants healthy to achieve a strong performance.

It is the time of year when stores get turned out to grass and it is a cheaper option to achieve growth rates if grass management is spot on. Target growth rates of 0.8-1.0kg/day can be achieved at grass.

Below are a few points to manage rotation grazing:

- Maintain the quality of the pasture, the sward height is key
- Stock paddocks / fields appropriately to grass availability and be flexible with numbers of stock or field sizes as appropriate.
- If a paddock's sward height gets too long then cut for hay or silage.
- Consider feeding a small amount of a cereal based concentrate to support the growth rates and rumen function, but also ease the transition when the cattle go on to a finishing diet.

It is even more important to have good quality grazing if finishing cattle at pasture. It is hard to finish continental cattle and bulls at pasture but it is achievable to finish heifers and native types of cattle at grass. Supplementary feed is often needed for the cattle to gain weight and finish efficiently. Recommended feed rates of supplementary feed are 0.5kg per 100kg liveweight when close to finishing.

For further advice, have a look at the DN Beef Feeding Guide or speak to your local DN Sales Specialist.

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