



DN NEWSLETTER

issue 16

As the year moves on and we leave summer behind the grass quality starts to diminish. It doesn't matter which category of stock we are looking after; this is likely to have an impact on performance.

Weekly Grass Analysis

There is a great variation in grass growth across the UK with a difference of 95kg DM/ha between the highest and lowest growth rates. As we get into the autumn season the grass quantity and quality starts to decline.

Grass growth (kg DM/ha)	64.8
Dry matter (%)	17.1
Metabolizable Energy (MJ/kg DM)	11.8
Crude Protein (%)	20.4

Lambs and Sheep

Lambs are likely to start dropping liveweight gain unless fresh grass is available, but still with lower gains than earlier in the summer, and good grass maybe being kept ready for pre-tupping ewes. Decisions need to be made to ensure grass is not being utilised for lambs and then not available for the ewes now and in the spring for lambing. Does this mean sending lambs off farm to be grazed elsewhere, or sold as store lambs, or fed to support growth and keep liveweight gain at an optimum? What gives the best return?

Suckler Cattle

Suckler herds may be deciding on the time for housing and weaning. Spring calving herds will be heading towards housing and offering some creep feed to calves now, can ease the transition at weaning as well as sustaining growth rates and helping reduce the stress of the change in environment. Don't forget the risks of pneumonia, now is the time to consider vaccination to ensure the calves are fully prepared before housing.

Unpredictable Fluke Year

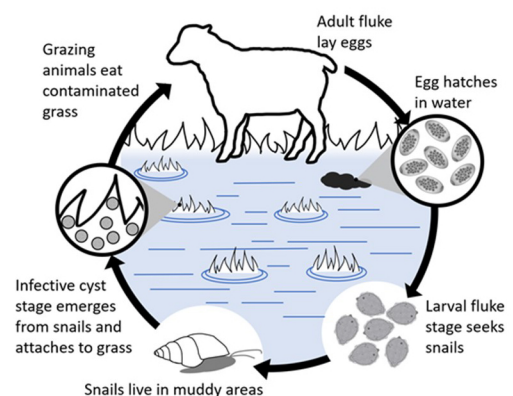
This year is looking like it will not be a typical fluke year due to the dry spring and very wet summer. SCOPS and COWS are advising to blood test for fluke before treatment.

Treating animals for fluke before knowing the disease status in stock may be a waste of money and time and it does not protect stock against future infection. Livestock are still at risk of fluke if treated before peak infection and if they remain on pastures with fluke.

This seasons lambs should be used as indicators of the presence of fluke. Six to ten lambs should be tested every month. If the results are negative there is no need to treat the whole flock for fluke. Once the results start to show positive, speak to your vet about treating the flock with triclabendazole, closantel or nitroxinil to target the immature stages of fluke.

Store Lambs

If you are buying in store lambs then speak to your vet about the best control programme. Any dead lambs should be opened up to check for the presence of mature fluke.



Dairy Cows

Dairy herds may also be seeing the impact of cows remaining out at grass with yields dropping off and lower body condition scores. This is a good time to monitor the cows even more closely than normal and start buffer feeding if required. If the good weather changes we may also need to consider bringing the cows in at night.

Dry cows will be receiving a lower quality diet and even if they are better out from an environment perspective, we now need to ensure rumen fill, so feeding a dry cow ration in a bare paddock will give a better transition than just relying on poor pasture and expecting them to adjust to coming in shortly before or at calving. Remember, it takes 3 weeks for the rumen to adjust so if far off dry cows are on grass, do not expect them to transition well through a high straw close up diet, and then onto milking rations. Keep the changes to a minimum depending on the individual farm situation.

Forage and Soil Testing



Now is a good time to get grass tested for quality to establish realistically what the animals will be getting from it. It is also a good time to test forages to ensure you know what is ahead for the winter and plan for extra feed or supplementary feed if required. Testing forages for minerals can allow us to work with the base diet and ensure the balance of minerals supplied matches the requirements of the stock performance.

Soil testing is also worth considering from 1st November to end February when the soils are fully wet and this can allow for Spring supplementation to support optimal growth next year.



Parasite Forecast

Parasitic Gastroenteritis (PGE) causing roundworms of cattle are present in large numbers on the pasture until the end of the grazing season. Stock which have been on permanent pasture throughout the grazing season are at a higher risk of infection. Also young cattle in their first grazing season are at higher risk of PGE infection. Youngstock can have a reduced growth rate of up to 30%.

Common signs of PGE are:

- Loss appetite
- Loss of BCS and weight
- Profuse diarrhoea

Lungworm

Outbreaks of lungworm are difficult to predict but the risk of infection peaks in late summer and autumn. There is an increased risk with wetter summers or a prolonged rainfall period as the larvae are dispersed from the faeces into the pasture in large numbers.

Early signs of the disease are:

- Widespread coughing in a group, especially after exercise
- Increased respiratory rate and difficulty breathing
- Rapid weight loss and BCS
- Milk drop

