



Douglas Green **Consulting Ltd**

SPRING NEWSLETTER

Included in this issue:

- Grazing Management – what should you be considering?
- Fallow Ground – what are your options?
- SCC – How do you make the right decision?

Welcome to the early spring edition of the Douglas Green Consulting Ltd newsletter.

Although it may not feel like it, thanks to the relentless rain and chilling wind, spring is just round the corner and now is the time to be thinking about grazing plans and what to do with fields that remain uncropped thanks to the wonderful British weather!

In this edition we look at what you need to think about ready for spring turnout and what you can do with those bare fields.



Is the grass greener?

With the worst of winter behind us, now is the time to plan ahead for spring turnout. In an industry that faces a growing number of challenges careful planning and full utilisation of your resources can have a big impact on profit margins. Successful grazing plans can help to stabilise your feed costs and improve your overall margin. So, what do you need to consider before spring turnout?



Grazing Strategies

With prolonged wet weather, the water tables remain high and this could have an influence on when spring turnout is possible for many herds. The warmer than average winter temperatures could also influence grass growth, so vigilance will be needed to ensure grass does not get away from you.

Start measuring your grass now and use resources such as Agrinet to plan and manage your grazing going forwards

It costs 30% less to produce a litre of milk from spring grass compared to conserved forages. Whilst spring grass is economic, utilising this resource should not be at the expense of overall



production, cow condition or fertility. The box below outlines some of the key considerations necessary when thinking about spring turnout:

Grazing Reminders!

1. Only turnout if ground conditions allow!
2. Multiple entry and exit points are very helpful in avoiding poaching in gateways and damage to paddocks
3. Turnout early when the grass is short and at the 2 leaf stage
4. Aim to graze your entire platform by the end of March (if dry enough)
5. Turnout for a couple of hours initially, building it up gradually
6. During the initial turnout phase, be prepared to rehouse if it becomes very wet
7. Use electric fencing to ensure cows don't go back on the same area twice
8. Tight spring grazing improves grass quality mid – season and increases milk from grazing by up to 2 litres/day
9. Graze down to **1,600 kg/DM/ha** in the spring to encourage cows to graze tighter throughout the year and improve grass quality
10. Aim for an average cover of **1,850 – 1,900 kg DM** by mid April

As well as considering your grass, you should also devote some time to your infrastructure. Time will be well spent walking your cow tracks and fences to determine whether any repairs are necessary before turnout. Also, check all water troughs to ensure they are clean, working properly and there are no leaks. What is the ground surrounding troughs and in gateways like? Use of bark or chippings in these high traffic areas will help with access and cow flow. Gates, tracks, troughs and fences that are well maintained will make for happy cows and happy staff!



Staggering!

Did you know?

Hypomagnesaemia (grass staggers) is responsible for the loss of 0.5-1% of dairy cows across the UK each year.

(Source: Dairy Co. Grass +)

One of the key considerations at turnout is the availability of magnesium and the prevention of grass staggers. Magnesium is not stored in the body, so it is important to ensure the correct daily mineral level requirement is met.

Supplementation during risk periods such as turnout is advised. This can be carried out using various methods:

- Feed Compounds
- Mineral Supplements
- Magnesium Boluses
- Licks and Blocks
- Magnesium in the water troughs
- Pasture dressing
- Use of magnesium rich plants

Feed compounds and mineral supplementation are two of the most common ways to ensure the milking herd receive adequate amounts of magnesium. Prior to turnout we would advise you



contact us to discuss the new milking cow turnout diet to ensure the diet provides the necessary mineral levels and can be introduced gradually prior to grazing.

Heavy use of nitrogen and potash fertilisers in the spring will also have an impact on Mg availability. The greater the level of N and K the lower the Mg availability, so careful fertiliser planning and applications will be important as well. You **should not** be applying manures/fertilisers to grazing fields with a **Potash index of 2 or more**. Should you have any queries, don't hesitate to contact Janice who can advise you in more detail.



Spring Cropping

Warren Buffett stated, '**predicting rain doesn't count.....building arks does!**' and after this autumn and winter rainfall many may agree that arks may have been necessary! The continuous rain and wet conditions provided many challenges for cropping, but the key is how best to act on these challenges as we approach spring. Many farms will have a large proportion of land uncropped so what opportunities are available to help push the business forwards?

- Plant early Maize varieties so that you can establish a good reseed in the autumn
- Plant Westerwold mix – this offers good quality forage and is particularly good for silaging



- Drill Spring Cereals
- Plant stubble turnips or forage rape – if forage stocks are short this could provide a forage alternative.

These options all offer benefits of additional forage or income, but they should be approached with caution and careful planning will be required. Spring cereal seed is running short so the price is higher and access to seed might be more problematic. The demanding weather conditions may also limit the options available as travelling on the land still may not be possible during early spring. It will also be important to look at soil structure following the prolonged period of rain. Seed going into ground with poor soil structure will not flourish and will result in costs to the business not benefits.

It should be noted that spring sown arable break crops are not always particularly profitable, so it is worth taking the opportunity to talk to local arable farmers about growing forage as part of their rotation if you find that your forage stocks are dwindling.

We would encourage you to engage with us as early as possible to talk through the options available, the likely cost implications to the business and the ramifications of spring drilling on autumn reseeds.



Prevention is better than cure!

When considering spring turnout, we should be mindful of the potential risk of environmental mastitis. The box below outlines some of the key precautions that can be taken to minimise the mastitis risk:

Reducing the risk!

1. Ensure cow tracks are clean and free draining
2. If using bark tracks, ensure cows are kept moving when using them; do not allow cows to lie down on these tracks
3. Minimise muddy areas around troughs and gateways
4. Consider positioning water troughs on concrete pads to minimise poaching
5. Don't overstock grazing paddocks, particularly during wet weather
6. Grazing paddocks should have 21 days rest before cows return to them to allow for the bacterial load to reduce. This is easier to achieve with rotationally grazed milking herds.

If you are unlucky enough to notice cows with higher SCC due to new infections, we have included a useful decision-making flow chart (supplementary page) to help decide the best course of action for the individual cow. Prompt action will result in a more effective cure rate and could result in cost savings long term.



'By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail'

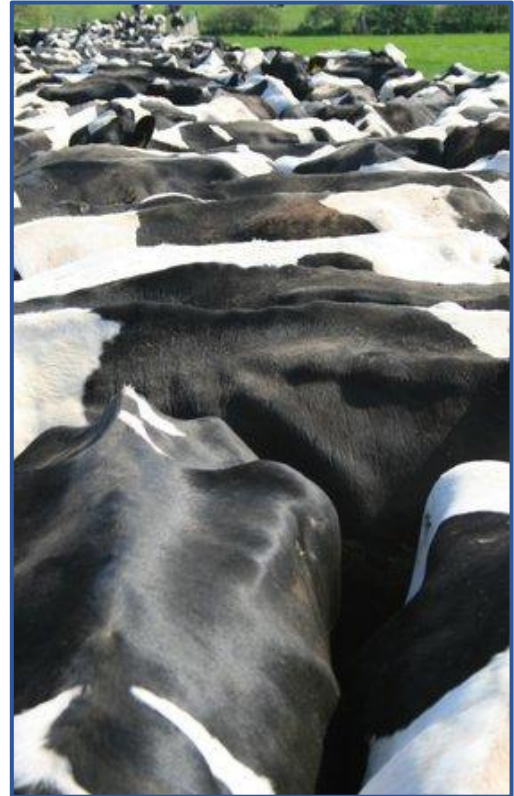
With spring around the corner, now is the time to prepare your grazing plan, turnout diets and spring cultivations to make the most of all opportunities available.

If you would like support on how to implement any of the options discussed in this newsletter, please contact us and one of our consultants would be happy to advise you further.

Call our office on 01666 817278

Or email

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Somatic Cell Count Decision Making Flow Chart

