



Issue 100 - February 2019

The Farm Consultancy Group



Welcome to our 100th edition of the newsletter. Included in this month's newsletter are articles on new staff members, beef discussion group meetings, commodities updates, managing ryegrass, maize seed, and consultancy and secretarial services.

Your feedback and comments are most welcome. If clarification is required, please contact the article contributor or for more articles and news visit www.fcgagric.com.

Edited by Gerard Finnan of David Bardgett Ltd and The Farm Consultancy Group Tel: 07976 426420.

Midwest Team is Expanding - Emily Wynder and Tom Malleson

In addition to Charlotte Male joining us recently as a Rural Administrator we are pleased to announce that we have recruited two further consultants to join the team at Midwest Consulting enabling us to expand our services we can offer to existing and new clients.

Emily Wynder has joined the team as a Rural Compliance Consultant. Emily has previously worked for Promar as a Farm Administrator and more recently has worked for Red Tractor as an Inspector. She lives on a beef farm in Somerset and has a good understanding of farming systems. Emily's role within the business will be to undertake the following areas of work:

- Basic Payment applications.
- Countryside Stewardship applications and claims.
- NVZ record keeping.
- Cross compliance.
- Manure management plans.
- Soil management plans.
- Grant applications.



Emily will be getting in touch with all our existing clients that we undertake this work for shortly to introduce herself. If you have any queries, please feel free to contact her on 07944 680469 or emilywynder@fcgagric.com

The second consultant joining us is Tom Malleson. Tom may be known to some of you as he operates a contract dairy farming operation of 370 cows near Gillingham. Tom has a wide range of experience in dairy farming and setting up new dairy farms. His role within the business will be to take some of the workload off Phil and Gerard, carrying out financial work, grazing management and helping with dairy design and layout.

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If you would like to speak to Tom, he can be contacted at tommalleson@fcgagric.com or on his mobile 07496 760242.

The three new additions to the team since the New Year have strengthened our business and will enable us to offer you a comprehensive service. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to know more on 01935 850093 or email midwest@fcgagric.com



Beef Discussion Group - Phil Cooper

At the end of January, we held our Beef Discussion Group benchmarking meeting. At this meeting we focused on some key costs and looked at the individual businesses against the AHDB Farm Bench figures. Whilst it is difficult to compare beef systems as everyone is different, the meeting highlighted a number of points that should enable members to reduce costs as follows:

- Vet costs: switch to dung sampling to identify if worming is required rather than just prophylactically treating all stock.
- The amount of colostrum that the calf receives is key to ensuring a healthy calf that will achieve the desired liveweights. Buying direct from market makes it much harder to identify whether the calf has had colostrum. Better to buy direct from the dairy farmer and ensure they have good colostrum protocols in place.
- Some group members are now working with specific dairy farmers to take all their beef calves. Some are now choosing the semen being used for beef to ensure they are getting the right type of calf for their system of rearing.
- Businesses which out wintered had significantly lower bedding costs. The conclusion was to extend grazing for as long as possible, e.g. February to November and try and out winter where soils allow.
- High fuel costs for those farmers who have a lot of blocks of land away from the main holding. When considering taking on additional land this should be a key consideration.
- Fuel costs can also be reduced along with bedding, contracting and machinery costs by extending grazing and out wintering.

Reducing costs is not easy but is the one area that the business can control. There are two elements to costs; the price paid, and the amount used. The price paid is not as easy to influence but can be helped by the use of buying groups. The amount used is well within a business's control.

If you would like to join the beef group or benchmark your costs, please contact Phil Cooper on 07798 673665 or email pcooper@fcgagric.com

Commodities Update (06/02/2019) - Andrew Jones

Over the past month the pound has strengthened, about 2 cents, against both the dollar and the euro. In both cases it had been stronger but slipped back again. Oil has risen about \$5/barrel but slipped back a little recently. GDT has continued to rise, almost across the board. The most recent auction went against expectation and showed its highest rise, 6.7%, for over two years over a fear of a drought in New Zealand.

Milk Powder - Unfortunately, we have seen a small increase in price and expect continued upward pressure.

Feed - Wheat has eased back slightly over the last month, but barley even more, so starting to show a differential now in prices. Prices are easing as we get closer to harvest.

Soya is close to £300/t, excluding transport etc., with a small increase for this time next year. General opinion is the trade war and Brexit negotiations nearing conclusion will lead to a stronger currency, resulting in further price decreases. Rape is up slightly as old crop stocks become short but are then looking to ease back to sub £200/t at harvest this year.

Fertiliser- Unexpectedly, and surprisingly, fertiliser prices have started to ease off over the last month. This has been caused by a strengthening of the pound and low demand so far this year.

Nitram & Urea are same price, which makes Nitram look extremely expensive per kg N compared to Urea. Lower Urea prices has resulted in lower Urea blend prices.

Ps & Ks have eased slightly over the last month, as merchants are looking to make space for the boat loads of fertiliser due, in port, as the season progresses.

With the pound expected to continue strengthening there is an expectation that prices will ease further longer term. However, in the short term if you haven't made any purchases yet, now might be the time to look for a deal with an oversupply situation in the current market.

Contact Andrew on 07717 442888 for up to date specific quotes, or email andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk

Are You Managing Ryegrass for Optimal Plant and Animal Performance? - Tom Malleson

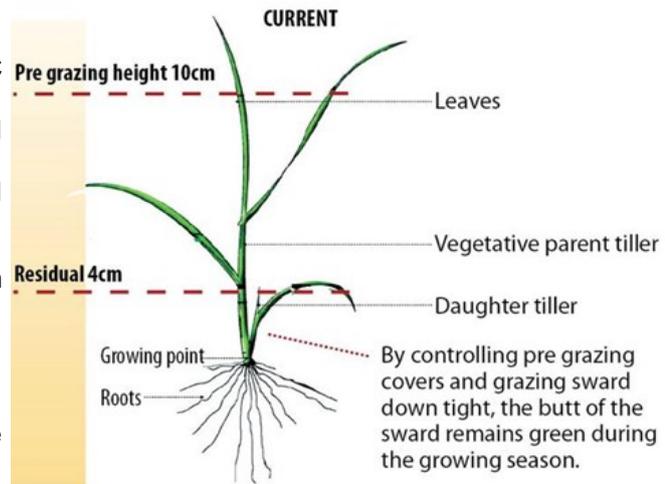
Ryegrass maintains a maximum of three live leaves per tiller. Delaying grazing beyond the emergence of the fourth leaf results in a decline in pasture quality, wasted pasture and shading of the lower tillers. Grazing before the 2-3 leaf stage will deplete the plant of its water-soluble carbohydrate (WSC) reserves which are replenished only during the growth of leaves 2 and 3, and are essential for emergence of the new leaf following grazing. It will also result in reduced root growth, reduced tillering and make the plant more susceptible to stress. Animal nutrition is also better at the 2-3 leaf stage. The grass will have a lower ratio of protein to WSC and a lower ratio of potassium to magnesium and calcium.

Grazing at the 2-3 leaf stage will:

- Allow the plant to fully replenish WSC reserves
- Present a more nutritionally balanced forage to the animal
- Reduce wastage, encourage tillering and prolong the life of the ley

Ensuring pasture is grazed to 3.5cm (1500kgDM/ha) will:

- Reduce wastage
- Maintain the quality of the next grazing
- Allow for rapid regrowth, providing the plant was grazed at no less than 2 leaves



Adapting grazing practices to follow the natural growth pattern of ryegrass has enabled many farmers to increase pasture output by up to 30% and improve animal performance from grazing. Applying these principles requires discipline! The animals and their managers will need a change of mindset and a period of retraining.

Contact Tom at tommalleson@fcgagric.com or your local FCG office for more information, advice on grazing management and setting up your farm to maximise milk and meat production from pasture this spring.

Maize Seed - Andrew Jones

Last year we worked with one seed supplier, Grainseed Ltd, and the outcome was really successful, with some great feedback on the maize that had been grown. As mentioned last month there is enough seed for the overall UK market this year, however some varieties are short, with some already sold out. If you purchased seed from us last year then we have already reserved, but not ordered, the same seed, to ensure supply.

This year business seems to be done even earlier than normal with people being misinformed that the Mesuro treated seed will be in limited supply, and to get it done before Brexit when the seed would already be here! Mesuro (for bird deterrent) has had a reprieve in the market for this year and so is available.



We had some excellent feedback last year and this included:

“Best crop of maize I’ve seen on the farm in the time I’ve been here”
“All the neighbours are saying it’s the best maize crop in the area”
Contractor says “it’s the best maize crop he’s harvested this year”

So, some really positive feedback from those that used seed we supplied last year. Why not try some this year and get even better value for money? Contact Andrew on 07717 442888 or email andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk

Why Use Our Consultancy & Secretarial Services? - Gerard Finnan

I often get asked this question by potential new customers and I answer it by listing some of the things we achieve for our customers in the last 12-18 months and here is a flavour.

- Reviewed Concentrate quality and pricing for a dairy farmer and secured a saving of £15k on a nine-month contract.
- Secured Grant funding of £180k for a dairy farmer looking to modernise his buildings and milking parlour ranging from buildings to cubicle mats, cattle handling and ID equipment, automatic scrapers etc.
- Over the last 5 years, reclaimed £500k from banks on behalf of clients for mis-selling fixed rate business loans.
- Set up a Beef Discussion Group to help farmers learn from each other as a group financially, physically and socially.
- Helped a number of farmers to tender successfully for council and private tenancies to start or grow their businesses.
- Helped a number of dairy farmers to convert from all year round to block calving.
- To put succession plans in place for a number of family farming businesses.
- To help existing farming businesses to diversify into many different non-farming enterprises e.g. milk vending machine selling over 1000 litres per week.
- Help secure bank funding for business expansion, restructuring and land purchase, e.g. restructured bank debt of £1.6m for client making significant savings in monthly costs.
- Continue to ensure our farming customers are compliant with current farming regulations.
- Appraise investment decisions and highlight independently what is best for the business.
- Provide advice on employment regulation, rates and administration.
- Successfully gained planning permission for a new dairy unit and four agricultural dwellings for farm workers.
- Secured funding to enable a new dairy unit to be built for 200 cows, including new parlour, slurry facilities and forage stores.
- Helped client increase the milk solids produced on the farm from 530kg MS/cow to 560kg MS/cow through improved grazing management and autumn diets.
- Gained 100% success with 2017 Stewardship applications with £240k grants received and £61k annual income for 5 years secured for the applicants.



Potentially, we can offer your business quite a variety of areas of expertise.



Why not contact us on 01935 850093 for a no obligation confidential discussion on how we might be able to help you achieve your business objectives?

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