



Issue 108 - October 2019

The Farm Consultancy Group



Welcome to our 108th edition of the newsletter. Included in this months newsletter are articles on working hours, commodities updates, return on investments, grass seed, feeding frequency, finance reviews, pension re-enrolments and new farm assurance standards.

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

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

Lower Cost Heifer Rearing? – Tom Malleson

I frequently hear figures quoted for the cost of rearing a heifer to the point of calving, ranging from £1,000 to £2,000. I also frequently drive past fields of heifers set-stocked with not enough grass and a line of cake troughs near the gateway!

Well-managed rotational grazing, following the rules set out in my article earlier this year, will not only easily achieve target growth rates for heifers of all breeds, sizes and systems, but will slash rearing costs and significantly increase pasture output, replacing the expensive purchased dry matter.

Based on weaning at 100kg, the following table outlines the daily liveweight gains necessary to achieve 2-year calving at 90% of mature bodyweight, for 3 dairy breeds.

	Mature weight	Heifer 90%	DLWG weaning to 2yr calving
Crossbred	500kg	450kg	0.55 kg/day
Friesian	600kg	540kg	0.68 kg/day
Holstein	700kg	630kg	0.82 kg/day

Inside this issue:

The Importance of Air Flow

2

Change to Interest Rates?

2

BSP 2020 & Greening

3

Commodities Update

3

Red Tractor Dairy Standards

4

Cow Behaviour at Milking

4

All these liveweight targets are achievable by combining well managed rotational grazing on high quality ryegrass/clover leys with simple winter rations based on high quality grass silage. Concentrate feeding should only be necessary for the Holstein, if the pasture is managed correctly, and then only in the first year, at low levels.

For the cost of 2 tonnes of cake you can purchase all the equipment you need to achieve this, and you won't have to lug bags of feed around anymore! There are now grants available for fencing and installing water supplies (subject to catchment area and stewardship application) and weigh equipment to manage and monitor youngstock at grass.

For more detail on how to achieve target growth rates on lower cost rearing systems, contact Tom at Tel: 07496 760242 or email tommalleson@fcqagric.com



How Important is Air Flow to My Cows' Health? - Andrew Jones

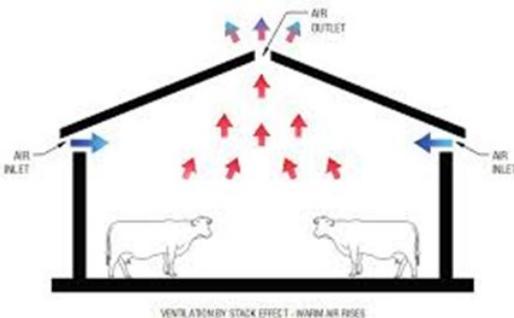
A cow can lose 50 litres of water a day through her lungs, as mentioned in my May article on Cows & Water. Other than her lungs, her skin also plays an important part in her sweating and therefore cooling.

Cows are happiest at 5-15°C. Cows can cope in a temperature range from -25°C upwards but struggle with anything over 20°C. At over 28°C you should consider sprinklers to aid cooling.

Cows that are breathing heavily prefer to remain standing, sometimes "perching" with their front end higher than their rear. This is so that the intestine puts less pressure on the diaphragm and the cow can breathe more easily. Sometimes you will see a cow's head up sniffing which is her looking for some fresh air flow. Your air flow speed should be 1m/minute. This can easily be assessed by throwing some feed in the air and see how it travels.

Signs of bad air flow include; cobwebs, smell i.e. ammonia, damp bedding and black mould. Digital dermatitis and heel horn erosion can indicate dampness and therefore bad air flow.

During the summer, water has the biggest effect on a cow being able to keep cool, as already mentioned. However, a lot of her heat is generated by her rumen as her feed ferments. This can be reduced by feeding more non fermentable carbohydrates, more bypass protein and increase fat content. Increased fats also increase the diets energy density and therefore she will need to eat less feed to fulfill the same requirements, as her intakes decrease with the heat. If not adjusted this can lead to a loss of energy and ultimately body condition score.



If you are looking at installing fans look at the "at risk" groups first, so your transition cows, and then in your collecting yard, along with sprinklers, as this is where cows are pushed up together. Then finally over the cows bedding.

On matters of cow signals and providing the most effective management response, speak with Andrew on Tel: 07717 442888 or email andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk

Are Interest Rates Changing? - Ed Warren

Whilst we have no signs of a move in base rate everyone seems very relaxed. However, it's not quite as simple as that. Are lenders likely to increase their margins on future deals?

The market remains reasonably competitive and I notice variations in pricing on each deal I look at. However, nothing is set in stone and whilst margins have increased in some cases, all in fixed rates still remain very competitive.

A lot of land deals will have just completed, and the next busy completion time is next Spring. Brexit and a very probable General Election continue to throw uncertainty and the £ continues to be very weak helping exports.

If you are looking at any projects involving finance, I am always available for a meeting to discuss ways of financing. Contact Ed at edwarren@fcgagric.com or Tel: 07434 723443, for an alternative quote.

Midwest Consulting Limited is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and is a registered credit broker FRN793780. We are members of the NACFB.



BPS 2020 and Greening - Sophie Cahill

It may seem a little early to be thinking about next year's Basic Payment Scheme application, however, now is the time to start checking your cropping plans against the current BPS greening rules.

Any BPS applicant with more than 10ha of arable land must consider the greening rules when thinking about their cropping for the next year.

For those with between 10ha and 30ha of arable land, you must grow at least two different crops and neither crop should take up more than 75% of your total arable area.

If you grow over 30ha of arable crops, then you must grow at least three different crops. Of these crops, the main crop cannot cover more than 75% of the total arable area and the two main crops cannot total more than 95% of the total arable area.

There are, however, several exemptions that may apply in certain scenarios.

Those that are subject to the greening rules must also consider which Environmental Focus Areas they will use in their BPS 2020 application.

We are more than happy to run through your 2020 cropping plan with you now, to check that it will comply with the Basic Payment greening regulations. Doing so now will save time when it comes to putting together your next BPS application and will certainly save the need for any last-minute changes to meet the rules. Contact Sophie at sophiecahill@fcgagric.com or Tel: 07496 587011 for more information or specific queries.



Commodities Update (1st October) - Andrew Jones

Over the last month the pound has risen two cents against the euro and one cent against the dollar. Oil had risen sharply on the back of the attack on the oil refineries in Saudi Arabia but has since fallen back to a price within a dollar of where it was this time last month. The last two GDT auctions saw increases of 2% and 0.2%. Global dairy markets are set to remain firm through until at least mid-2020. Longer term, they are not so sure due to slowing global activity and lowering consumer confidence.

Milk Powder - On the back of SMP prices firming 25% since April, I have just seen an increase in SMP prices by up to £80/t.

Feed - Wheat prices are +£10/t in the last month and barley +£5/t. Some of this increase is due to the lack of supply as cereal farmers are waiting for a better price. Wheat harvest, home and abroad, has been good so prices are not expected to hit 2018 prices. Soya -£2/t and rape +£2/t. World stocks for soya are good, despite being lower than originally forecast in the US. Asian Swine Flu is still taking its toll and so reducing demand. Rape has increased due to tight seed situation and uncertainty over overseas harvests.



Fertiliser - All fertiliser has surprisingly eased this last month, not as low as the summer prices but down. Some of this I think is merchants trying to clear stocks that they have built up prior to Brexit before the final boats arrive before 31st October! Remember, if we crash out with a no deal Brexit, we expect to immediately fall under WTO rules which will see a 6.5% tariff placed on fertiliser imports, so approximately £15-20/t. Therefore, my advice must be if you have the space, buy fertiliser now for delivery by the end of October. To help cash flow I have a couple of suppliers that will finance the purchase through until April 2020. This will add a few pounds to the current spot price admittedly, because you are delaying payment, but this is still cheaper than the £15-20/t the tariff could add to prices.

For up to date specific quotes, contact Andrew on Tel: 07717 442888 or email andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk

Meeting the Red Tractor Dairy Standards: - Emily Wynder

Over the next couple of months, I will be looking at different areas of the dairy farm and requirements for meeting Red Tractor standards. Following a recent visit to a client who asked me to help them prepare for their first Dairy audit, we agreed an action plan to get the farm in shape.

Milk storage area/Bulk tank room:

- Ensure there is a work light outside the service entrance for tankers collecting in the dark.
- Making sure the external doors are kept shut when not in use and locked over night for security. It is important that they are also vermin proof, with holes/gaps in and around the door are filled to prevent access.
- Maintain all concrete inside and out of bulk tank room which is full draining and pothole/crack free.
- Keeping walls, floors, ceiling and doors fully washable with food-safe sealing, no cracks or flaking paint which can harbour dirt or water.
- Bulk tanks must always be shut routinely, any perishing rubber hoses or bunds must be replaced. They should be kept cobweb, dust free, with no chance of milk contamination.
- You must have a dedicated wash basin for tanker drivers which has hot/cold water, soap and towels, not to be used for general day-to-day cleaning.
- The milk storage area should be free of chemicals and equipment, including buckets, rubbish bins and medicines.
- All drains must be kept unblocked and there must be adequate ventilation to prevent odour build up.
- All lights must have shatterproof covers.
- An annual maintenance contract must be held and available at audit.



Next month we will be going through getting your parlour up to standard. In the meantime, contact Emily at emilywynder@fcgagric.com with any specific queries on Farm Assurance or help with getting ready for an annual inspection. Alternatively, you can call Emily on Tel: 07944 680469.

Happy Cows in Parlour? - Checking Cow Behaviour at Milking? - Mark Yearsley

Heifers can often paddle around whilst being milked until they become used to the routine but what about your cows, do they become unsettled during milking. Cow behaviour during the milking routine is often put down as a temperament behavioural trait through breeding but this could be a smoke screen. An incorrect milking routine is likely to be the underlying problem.



When observing a cow being milked there are two periods where she could show signs of discomfort – one and a half minutes after cups on, this is the point when milk flow slows if she wasn't properly stimulated or the optimum let down time was too short. When the milk flow slows the vacuum level at the teat end increases which she senses and starts paddling around or trying to kick the unit off.

The second time we see abnormal behaviour is at the end of her milking when milk flow has slowed or stopped, again high vacuum levels at the teat end and the mouthpiece of the liner. Visual signs are rings on the top of the teat where the liner has pinched the base of the teat and haemorrhaging at the teat end.

If you would like your milking routine checked over to improve cell count, bactoscan or cow flow through parlour, call Mark on Tel: 07984 785190 or email markyearsley@fcgagric.com

FCG Sherborne Office:

Tel: 01935 850093

Email:
midwest@fcgagric.com

4 Trent Court
Trent, Sherborne
Dorset, DT9 4AY