

Grass Tips

- The target rotation length is 19-21 days on all farms but may be longer during periods of slow growth and shorter during periods of high growth rates
- The target pre-grazing yields increase as the stocking rate increases (and declines as it falls)
- For example, at a stocking rate of 3.0 cows/ha: **Stocking rate x allowance x rotation length + residual = 4.0 x 16 x 21 + 50 = 1394 kg DM/ha**
- You must also watch your average farm covers (AFC). The target figure is 160-190 kgDM/LU.
- For example, at a stocking rate of 4.0 cows/ha, the target average cover, with good grazing management, would be: **Stocking rate x 170 = 4.0 x 170 = 680kgDM/ha**
- By watching both your pre-grazing yield and AFC, you will be able to identify surpluses (and deficits) before they arise. You must react to a surplus by removing the surplus for baled silage – and remember that the quicker you react, the lower the cost of reaction!
- Longer rotations result in:
 - Less grass grown/ha
 - Poorer cow performance
 - Less grass utilised per ha
 - Grass of poorer digestibility

FERTILISER

- For most farms, the target is to have 90-100 units of fertiliser nitrogen (N)/acre applied by May 1st
- If phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) is required, a compound fertiliser should be used, e.g., 18:6:12 plus sulphur (S) (2 bags/acre).
- Sulphur is required on most soils
- Where P is limited (derogation farms), cattle slurry will be an important source of P to fill the P gap and must be targeted at fields with low soil P levels in the first instance.

CONTINUOUS TOPPING IS WASTING FEED!

- If we can grow extra grass on the farm, this can be harvested as surplus grass and made into silage
- Focus on this by putting in greater effort to target the “right grass” to enter (1300-1500 kg DM/ha)
- Farmers must ask the question – If I am continually topping, am I wasting feed?
- Could the paddock be skipped as it is too strong for grazing and nicer grass grazed so the paddock to be topped goes for round bales of silage instead?

Full technical support will be available to assist farmers in making grassland decisions. If you are interested in availing of this service please contact Gavin Hunt on 087-3453495