



DairyCo

BATH & WEST
GRASSLAND UK

GRASSLAND UK 2009 FACTSHEET

Profiting from grazing whatever the yield

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Both low input and high yielding herds can produce a good proportion of milk from grazing. The key is maximising palatability and the feed quality throughout the season.

Things to remember include:

- Plants store sugars in the bottom 4cm – grazing below this level will affect its ability to regrow after grazing.
- There are only ever three live leaves on a grass tiller, knowing this helps dictate entry level for grazing. Once a fourth leaf starts to grow one leaf is dying.
- Maximum grass growth and feed quality occur after the second leaf has grown.
- The rate at which new leaves appear depends on temperature, with a minimum soil temperature of 5C for grass plants to start to grow and a minimum of 8C for clover to start to grow.
- Keeping the level of dead grass in the sward low tends to increase palatability and helps achieve the desired residuals, benefiting future grass growth.
- Good grassland management can result in high and consistent energy and protein levels – results on seven farms with a high level of grazing management being monitored in a DairyCo project this spring show this. See dairyco.org farm management website for weekly results.
- Leaving a grazing residual of 5cm is the key to achieving consistent grass quality and growth. Good grassland managers take as much interest in how much grass is left after grazing as how much is in the next day's block.
- Good rotational grazing management can result in 80% grass utilisation. A more typical level is 50% showing considerable room for improvement.
- Access to grass - tracks and gateways - are the biggest barrier to grazing in wet weather. Consider investing in tracks and multiple openings through an electric fence, remember cows do not have to exit a field the same way they entered.
- White clover use in swards can increase intakes, improves growth rates and protein content and contribute approx 150kg N/ha/year to companion grasses. However, graze with caution as excessive use can cause bloat.

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