



DairyCo

BATH & WEST
GRASSLAND UK

GRASSLAND UK 2009 FACTSHEET

Achieving good health and fertility at grass

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Making the most of grazing is about avoiding potential pitfalls too. It can be easy to turn the cows out and let them get on with it, but planning is essential to avoid problems.

Potential problems include buffer feeding to avoid staggers and displaced abomasums; to think about heat detection to minimise PD negatives; and to consider fluke and other parasite burdens. Instead of out of sight, out of mind look at health planning for grazing cows and youngstock and many of the potential pitfalls can be avoided.

Things to consider include:

- Fresh calved and high yielding cows are at risk of staggers and displaced abomasum. Ensuring good rumen fill and good intakes can avoid these issues. Ensure cows have access to a palatable source of long fibre when grazing, especially if conditions are cold and wet.
- Heat detection is tricky when cows are out of sight; consider making full use of heat detection aids while cows are at grazing. The application of tailhead devices, such as tailpaint, Kamars or Estrotects on all open cows can help to minimize the number of missed heats and PD negatives.
- Good tracks and gateways are important to maximise use of grass, but they are also important in avoiding summer lameness. Ensure all high use areas have a good surface to avoid problems with luer or foul.
- Mild winters and wet summers have increased the worm and fluke burden in adult cows. Strategic bulk tank testing and discussion with your vet can make sure that you have good health and milk yields, while avoiding unnecessary and expensive treatments too.
- Youngstock should not be left out of any management plan and consideration of trace element status is essential. Grazing can be deficient in copper, selenium and iodine. Animals that are not receiving any supplementary feeding will be most susceptible, and this can result in infertility and poor growth rates.

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