



Pasture Quality Trend (January 2016)

Dry Matter (DM) (%)

The rain that we received through mid-late Jan improved pasture production and gave some welcome moisture. However, it did not do the cows any favours. The lack of sunshine over a 2-week period, combined with moist conditions did not allow the pasture to photosynthesise well, resulting in several things. The pasture filled up with water, we saw the DM% well below 15% in most pastures, this had potential to limit intake, and increase passage rate, which further reduced nutrient absorption. Lack of sunshine increased the amount of non-protein nitrogen (NPN) in the pasture, as the plant could not convert this nitrate to true protein. As a result of this cow's manure got loose and bubbly and milk production suffered. Furthermore, the dull days meant that the pasture was not producing sugars, which were much needed to help soak up the excess NPN and provide energy for milk production. Pasture conditions are improving now with sunshine.

Pasture production has been good, especially with some sunny days recently. Covers are increasing as most people are looking to increase their round length, however it is important to keep quality under control going forward. Make sure covers are not too long (APC should be below 2500 kgDM) and make silage where necessary.

Crude Protein (CP) (%)

We are back into a flush of vegetative pasture growth, with most pastures finished their reproductive phase. This is causing a flush of protein, and when it is cloudy, NPN. Starch will make sure of excess protein, and sugar (molasses) will help with nitrate issues. You will prevent drops in production during dull days, especially if it looks as there may be a few coming, by adding 500 g molasses – before you drop. Molasses will also help bring them back, but generally once they have dropped and then the molasses is added, the sun is usually back out. Then you are just left with a dip in production that could have been easily avoided.

Mg, P and Ca absorption are influenced by high nitrates in the pasture. We can see some downer cow issues at this time of year, as such mineral supplementation is important, especially with higher producers. Give us a bell if you want to go through what your cows need, are getting, and what you can get away with.

Neutral Detergent Fibre (NDF) (%)

NDF is remaining at reasonable levels, 40-42%. Paddocks with seed head, or over 3000 kgDM will have higher NDF and will reduce intake. It takes about 5 MJ for a Frisian to produce 1 l. So an increase of 3% NDF will drop intake by 1.15 kgDM at 11.5 MJME = a drop by 2.65 l.

Metabolisable Energy (MJME/kg DM)

ME has been poor lately. This is a result of the weather and the inability of the pasture to produce as much soluble sugars (at 8-10% where it should be 15%+). This is the main reason that ME is lower than expected at this time of year. Molasses, grain or sugar will help the situation, we can go through the cost benefit analysis for you to help decide where you will get the best value for money, or if it is better off not spent.



Monthly Pasture Report

