



## Pasture Quality Trend (Dec – Jan 2018)

After a considerably long hot spell we have had some welcome rain and most soils have been filled to holding capacity. With some hot weather in the forecast and some more rain later in the week, this should set most farms up for a productive few weeks of growth. The cows however, have taken a bit of a hit, firstly from the wet weather, and now with the hot weather and high humidity. Cows will start using additional energy at temperatures over 20°C due to heat stress. Heat stress is a major influence of animal efficiency and productivity. When humid conditions are combined with hot weather cows have much less ability to cool themselves and the effect of the heat on the cows is greatly increased.

### Dry Matter (DM) (%)

DM% has dropped with the rain that we have had and may have caused some reduction in intake. DM% will rise again as the rain stopped and we get some drier weather. With wet weather, you will notice most cows drop in production, there are several reasons for this, firstly there will be some increase in energy cost, but much of the drop can be accounted as a reduction in ME intake. Cows are less willing to graze during wet weather, but mostly, utilisation is reduced, so less available feed for the cows to consume. During hot weather cows will shift their grazing times to eating more at night, rather than during the heat of the day. Ensure that you are giving your cows more to eat for their night break and pay attention to residuals when they leave a paddock. If, by the morning, residuals are very low, then offer more during their night break to reduce the possibility of the cows going hungry during the night, as you will not be checking them during the night to see if they need a new break. Shifting to 24 hour grazing is a good way to get around this, but make sure their new break is in the afternoon.

### Crude Protein (CP) (%)

CP% has started to increase again after the prolonged seed head stage. Don't be caught out yet with increasing CP% as there will still be some undegradable protein that is locked up in some stalky material. The pasture situation and per cow production will determine when protein supplements can be taken out, or if they are needed at all.

### Neutral Detergent Fibre (NDF) (%)

NDF levels have relaxed a little and as a result cows should be able to consume more pasture. These will not drop significantly until later in February, so if you have cows that are a little behind in BCS, keep some grain ticking away to maintain and build their condition. It is very easy to tell yourself that your cows are meeting BCS targets, but if you have any doubt, get an independent, certified person to come and score your cows. Separating lighter cows from fatter cows will enable you to preferentially feed the lighter cows from now onwards. This is both in the best interest of the cow, and the farm. The lighter cows are generally the better producers, so some extra feed their way will ensure that they better maintain production. We all know the benefits having the cows better equipped for the winter and subsequent calving, with production and reproductive gains.

### Metabolisable Energy (MJME/kg DM)

ME has dropped due to the heat, but with this rain and some good growth, ME as picked up to 12.0 in some of the latest tests we have had. Keep up with fertiliser and water where required.

Give us a bell if you want to discuss anything in this report such as grazing strategies to best maintain production in the heat, or how anything else in the report relates to your farm. Get in touch for an obligation free visit to explore what customisable services MilkMap have to add to your farms performance or profitability.