Have you got bad guts?

Stuart Holmes

There are a number of signs of acidosis to watch out for in your herd. For dairy cattle, milk fat less than 3.3% can indicate that the rumen isn’t functioning well and acidosis is a likely culprit. Finishing cattle, particularly bulls, will be agitated, which is not surprising for men with belly ache! They will fight and mount each other, which you may think is normal, however, bulls that are in settled groups should spend their days either walking or lying down and not wasting energy in aggressive behaviour. Feed intakes can often be erratic with variation among animals and between days. The muc is can be variable either loose with bubbling or firm, and anemically and may contain casts. There may also be undigested food particles in the muck even when processing of the diet has been OK. Increased numbers of lame animals, particularly laminitis can also be an indicator of acidosis. Also, watch out for ridges on the hoof surface too.

Acidosis arises from starchy / sugary diets, or from silages which have low neutral detergent fibre (NDF) and high potential acid load (PAL). Acidosis can also be a problem when cattle are grazing lush waste, bread, potatoes or too finely ground cereals are a recipe for acidosis if they are not handled carefully.

Acidosis can result in acidosis if they are not handled carefully. This year, farmers may be considering using cereals to finish lambs; good levels of finish can be achieved by doing this, but it is likely to result in acidosis, so using a good yeast is essential. Acidosis can also be a problem when cattle are grazing lush grass or new feed that is high in sugar. Diets based on bakery waste, bread, potatoes or too finely ground cereals are a recipe for acidosis if they are not handled carefully.

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W E Jameson & Son Ltd, Fosholme Lane Mill, Masham, N Yorkshire HG4 4EL
Tel: 01765 896666 • Fax: 01765 896662 • www.wejameson.co.uk

Farming funnies!

I’m struggling to find the best way to get my baby goats clean and ready for the village fete tomorrow. Does anyone know of any good internet sites where I can get tips on grooming kids?

The vet said to the dairy farmer “I’m sorry, it’s bad news. All your cows have Blue Tongue.” The farmer replies “Bejayesus!...I didn’t even know they had it!”
A better year...

David Lewis

Much to everyone’s relief, the good weather eventually arrived this spring even if it was 3-4 weeks late. Although first cut grass silage was generally good quality, there wasn’t much of it about.

Silage results are showing some encouraging trends, but as always, averages can be misleading. A 5% increase in DM from 30.8% to 32.4% in 2012 to 2013 (see table) respectively should support good forage intakes and help rumen stability. However, drier forages can encourage sorting, so be aware of silage chop length and ration uniformity. A healthy and active rumen will maximize forage digestibility, dry matter intake and hence milk yield. Compared with 2012, D value and ME are 2% higher this year, average ME is 11.0 this season, compared with 10.8 MJ/kg DM last year.

There are still large variations in silage quality, with the lowest energy forage resulting in 3.4 l/h/d less milk than the average, and the lowest DM forage at 13.8% (actual forage ME of 9.8 MJ/kg DM) requiring an extra 41.6 kg FW to achieve the same 10 kg DMI as the average, or an unachievable 81.3 kg FW intake to deliver the same energy intake as the average.

The key points from the silage analyses are:

- First cuts are good quality with high intake potential
- This year’s forages will be more digestible than last
- High dry matters will increase the possibility of sorting and therefore rumen health issues

As individual silages vary in protein, energy, stability & intake potential, ask us to formulate a blend for you to match your silage.

How do minerals look this year?

Peter Harland

Trace elements are commonly responsible for nutritional problems that affect growth, milk production or fertility. Further complicating matters, some minerals interact with others, reducing supply. The table below shows the averages for grass silage for 2012 and 2013, there are a number of minerals worth discussing. It’s also worth bearing in mind that these figures are simply year to year averages and will not reflect deficiencies on individual farms.

Although copper levels are up for 2013, so too are molybdenum and sulphur which will tie up copper supply. Iron too will interact with copper which although down in 2013 is still at high levels on some farms.

Selected mineral averages in grass silage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mineral</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>% Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magnesium %</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium %</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>10.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulphur %</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron mg/kg</td>
<td>361.5</td>
<td>290.01</td>
<td>-19.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobalt mg/kg</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc mg/kg</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>26.57</td>
<td>-1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selenium mg/kg</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molybdenum mg/kg</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>10.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper mg/kg</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>20.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For purchased rams, upon arrival on the farm, the risks posed by anthelmintic resistant worm species, scab and liver fluke must be recognized. All purchased sheep must be quarantined and wormed. Also remember to ask the vendor about vaccination status, it may be worth vaccinating for clostridial diseases in any case.

Looking after the boys!

Kathryn Lawson

Although there’s not much time left now to get tupps ready for their ladies, there are still a few things that you can do to help fertility.

Foot care is essential to maintain ram soundness. Research from Warwick University has shown that routine foot paring is now not particularly if you’re going shopping for tupps this autumn.

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