

## Moving forward

This is a summary of advice from a number of people and resources and may help to give people a plan of attack to move forward.

Update your Cash Flow and break even budgets. Know what you can and can't do and where the limits are specifically for your farm. This can help you to prioritise what has to be done, what needs to be done and what is optional. This will also give you an indication of your fertiliser and chemical spend can be and your MG Trading Agronomist can help you to maximise your bang for your buck. In a low milk price environment growing high quality pasture is going to be very important. By spraying for broadleaf weeds you will take out the competition for your high quality pasture which you want to maximise. By doing this you are also maximising any fertiliser applied as it will be growing high quality pasture rather than weeds. There are a number of different chemicals out there for different applications. Talk to an agronomist to target specific issues rather than a blanket spray of the whole farm.

Look at your grazing rotation. Current leaf appearance rates are 14 to 20 days. So if we are looking to target a 2 and a half to 3 leaf stage at grazing we are looking at a 40 to 50 day round. If daily growth rates are between 15 to 25kg per day. With an average residual of 1200kg and 40 days growth at 15kg per day there would be 600kg/ha available for grazing. If you are wanting each cow to eat 12kg of grass then your stocking rate would be 50 cows per ha/per 24 hours. For a 100 ha farm with 250 cows is this growth rate enough or do we need to help growth with nitrogen and gibberellic acid? We would need to increase growth to 30kg/day to get to a 40 day rotation so look at your options.

Look at your grazing residuals. Your cows are very good at letting you know if they are still hungry. But are they making the most of what is in front of them? Good grazing residual of 5cm between clumps is ideal. If the residual is longer the cows are leaving some behind. If the residual is shorter then are you able to give them a bigger allocation?

Watch your cows, let them tell you what is going on. If you are getting an ammonia smell in the dairy as a general rule there is too much protein in their diet. Can you change your ration to alleviate this problem? How do the cows react when you enter the paddock? Are they fast or slow when walking to and from the dairy. These may all give an indication of what is happening before you see a change in the vat or your solids.

Start planning for spring and summer now. What paddocks are not performing and is it a viable option to do something about it now.

How much silage and hay do you need moving forward? A rough rule of thumb is 3 to 4 round bales of silage per cow. But what is an average round bale and how much DM does it contain. A target of 1t DM per cow may be a better way of measuring your requirements. A Nutritionist can help you with a feed budget to get a handle on these figures. Also consider feed testing your silage this year to get a good handle on what you are really feeding your cows. At around \$60 per sample and testing 20 to 30 bales per sample for \$180 a 250 cow farm making 3 bales a cow could have tested approximately 10% of their silage.

Are there paddocks that need to be cropped? Do you want to crop and what are the options? Some farmers had success in a very tough 2015/16 summer using straight brassicas with new chemical formulations to handle weeds and pest. Is this an option for your farm?

What feed gaps are you trying to fill and do you need something that can be ensiled if there is an excess.

Talk to someone! Don't feel that you are in this alone, there is always someone who is willing to lend a hand or listen.