

## New year, new newsletter, new vet!

Hello and welcome to our first newsletter of 2019. This is a good opportunity for me to say hello as the new member of the Horizon team. Whilst I'm new to Horizon, I have known and previously worked with Dave and Dan for a number of years. We believe that this is an exciting phase in the development of Horizon and I'm extremely proud to be joining this truly independent practice. The future looks bright!

I'm not going to talk about the weather, other than to say that clearly mother nature has reminded us over the past few weeks that anything can happen in spring. This leads me nicely on to the content of this newsletter where Dave discusses the opportunities and challenges grazing poses. There's also an update from some recent trial work we've performed looking at the best way to synchronise heifers.

As always we'll update you on what's happening with the upcom-



ing courses. It's worth noting that we have secured funding for some of these. We will allocate this on a first come-first served, so it's worth booking early! That leaves me to sign off and to say that I'm very much looking forward to catching up with you soon.

### Upcoming events

#### **Wed 15th May – Milksure part 1—**

Back by popular demand, another chance to attend this valuable course if you missed it( last time.

#### **June TBC—QVIS Workshop —**

Given that QVIS scoring can be a bit of a minefield, we are organising a workshop for Tesco suppliers to discuss in more detail the component pieces of QVIS and more importantly how we can improve our scores.

**If you would like any more information or to register to attend please speak to one of us**

# Making better use of grass



as the small reduction in overall yield is more than offset by the increase in feed value.

### You can't manage it if you don't measure it

To really maximise performance you have to know your covers and simply looking at them just isn't accurate enough. If you don't have a plate meter buy one, it is one of the most valuable tools you can own when you consider the potential improvements in grazing output. From there it's just a case of regular measurement and adjusting the plan to keep a continuous flow of top quality grass in front of the cows. There's also the bonus that weekly walk will also help to keep your cholesterol at bay!

Regardless of production system, grass represents a valuable resource to all dairy farms. Whether you are a spring block calving herd looking to make maximal utilisation of grazed grass or a higher yielding unit looking to reduce feed costs on late lactation animals, grazing has an important role to play. Getting the most out of your grassland however, requires just as much attention to detail as any other element of feeding dairy cows. So, what are the key components to consider when grazing cattle?

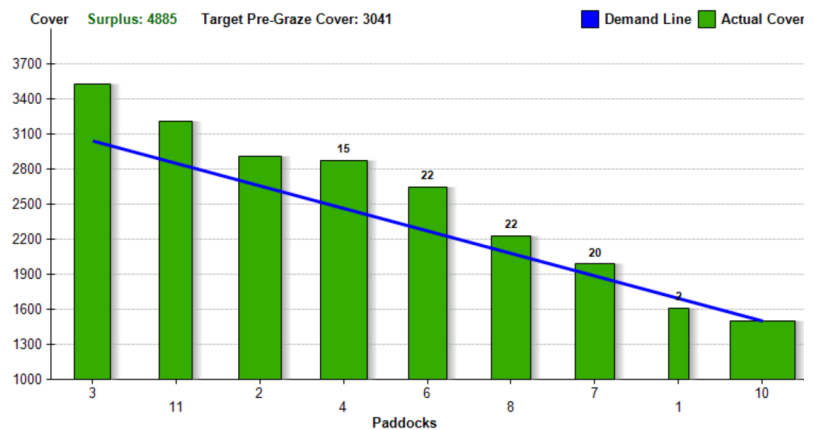
dry matter/hectare it would seem logical to let it spend as much of it's time at this stage as possible. Unfortunately, once the grass plant starts to throw up it's fourth leaf



### Start with the end in mind

Grass grows grass as the saying goes. It's fastest when the plant is at the three-leaf stage so if you want to maximise tonnes

the lower part of the plant begins to die, losing its nutritional value. So it isn't simply a case of growing grass but finding the balance between growth and value. This is exactly the logic that has driven increasing interest in multi cut silage systems



### Get your infrastructure right

First and fore most tracks are critical. Good tracks allow you to extend the grazing system without negatively impacting cow health and milk quality. They also make the job of moving cows to and from grazing

efficient as the herd will move at an even pace and there will be fewer



lame cows to slow things down. If you wouldn't be happy to run up your track in your socks, then it isn't good enough for your cows. Ensuring paddocks have adequate water supply to meet the herd's demands is obviously important but considering trough placement is also important. Simply

locating a single trough by the gateway can make fencing challenging and lead to poaching.. In the longer term considering how many cows you will graze, their daily demand and therefore re jiggering paddock sizes can make a big difference.

### The role of back fencing

In an ideal world we'd all have perfectly even sized paddocks that provided the herd with exactly enough grass for 12 hours grazing but that's not the way life is! The important thing to remember is that the grass plant conserves a tiny kernel of energy

which is just enough to let it send up it's first leaf after grazing. The problem is if that leaf gets eaten before it has had chance to rejuvenate itself it will devastate re-growth rates. Never allow stock access to the same grass for more than 48 hours as those tender new shoots are just too tempting!

### Mental attitude is key

It isn't all going to be sunshine and roses, particularly not an English summer! Grazing stock well is not an easy task and requires attention detail. The whole team have to buy in to the strategy. There will be setbacks but learning from them is part of the journey.



## Heifer synchronisation update

With spring turnout upon us, the question of how best to get bulling heifers served at grass once more rears its head. Whether you're looking to maximise results or minimise labour requirements, whether you're a tight block calver or an all year round herd, synchronisation can be a valuable tool to get heifers in calf without introducing the variables associated with a stock bull.

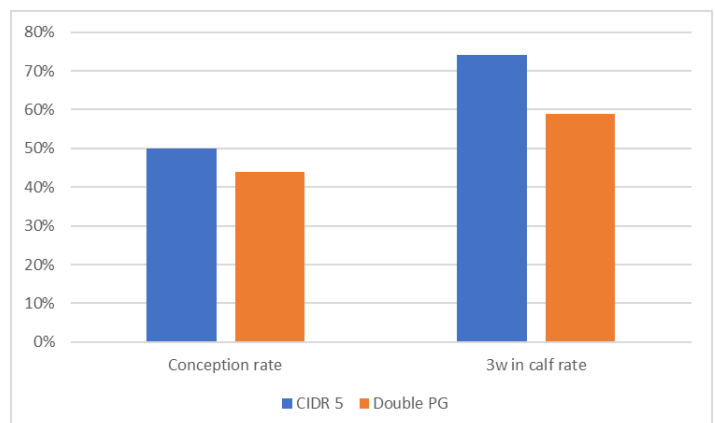
Whilst the concept of synchronisation is simple, there are a bewildering array of options out there all with their own exponents. So which option is best?

Last year we set out to test a series of alternatives with a number of

herds. Principally our research sought to establish how much benefit CIDR based programs deliver over the more traditional prostaglandin options and further to compare different variations on the CIDR program.

With most of the data now in, the results make interesting reading. CIDR programs consistently out

performed double prostaglandin with headline figures of 6% increase in conception rate and 15% increase in 3 week in calf rate. With many herds using more expensive sexed semen on heifers and the benefits of earlier first calving it certainly seems to indicate that the CIDRs deliver a return on investment.



## What else have we been up to this month

The last few months have again been busy, with a few extra interesting projects slotted in around the clinical work.

Dave has been busy continuing his work with some of the AHDB Strategic Dairy farms, both at open days and the behind-the-scenes advisory work. Following on from this, he has also been heavily involved in rewriting the new PD+ resource which will be available to farmers before too long. You may have also seen his webinar about sexed semen use as well – if you haven't and would like to watch it it's easy to find on the AHDB Dairy website.

In January Dan spent some time working with large dairies in Russia, both with farm visits and

speaking at a conference for vets and dairy managers. Although it was cold at times in the UK this winter, over there the thermometer hit the dizzy lows of -29 degrees Celsius which cer-



tainly presents some challenges for dairy farming (and visiting advisors)! Of the units visited, the average herd size was 5000 cows milked approximately three times per day, so these were not small farms but as always

there are areas to keep driving for improvement. These visits are always interesting and provide us a good opportunity to experience different things (including proper Russian moonshine) and

discover new ideas which we can bring home with us.

Dan also spoke at the XL Vets Ireland conference early in the year about driving

farmer engagement and antibiotic monitoring in practice. These topics certainly fuelled some good conversations that probably carried on it the bar well into the night, but sadly Dan was on a flight home by then!

### Contact us -

#### HORIZON DAIRY VETS

Unit 3  
The Depot  
Hanwood  
Shrewsbury  
SY5 8NY  
01952 350095  
info@horizondairyvets.co.uk

Dan -  
07508 271882

Dave -  
07939 201475

Mark -  
07432 875531



### Medicines update -

When we first decided to include a medicines update in each newsletter what we envisioned was a positive news update reporting new products and options available to farms. Unfortunately the last year has been categorized by one major out of stock after another. We had hoped the new year might signal a fresh start but the recent announcement of a massive shortage of local anaesthetic nationally was not what we were hoping for. As things stand we have a supply of anaesthetic to keep us going and a source through which to import further supplies but please speak to one of us asap if you are likely to need any in the near future.

Most of you will also be aware of the ongoing national issue with leptovaccine, following a long term supply issue with Leptavoid H. Most clients already have their Spirovac but if you are likely to need vaccine before the autumn please talk to us so we can do our best to source.

There is at least some positive news as it appears the issues with teat sealant supplies have finally abated and Orbeseal is now flowing again!