

1-31 Summer Management Plan

Having a plan is the key management tool to maximising profit and reducing stress in a dry summer. When it will rain is not easily predicted but a plan provides the framework to what decisions need to be made and when. A different plan will be required for an early summer dry than a late summer dry. A plan is essential to make sure that indecision or rash decisions are not made.

The plan needs to identify and document the key decisions required which will include targets and trigger points (dates). The following needs to be included in a plan:

- Timing and amount of nitrogen to be applied going into summer.
- Rotation length targets and dates. These decisions can be based on soil moisture deficit targets, i.e. begin the process of lengthening the rotation when soil moisture deficit reaches 15% of Field Capacity.
- Timing of sowing of summer crops and nitrogen applications to the crop
- The number of cows that can be fed in an average autumn. The later the dry period the less the advantage of feeding supplement to keep cows milking for when it rains.
- The amount of supplement surplus to requirements for winter that would be available for feeding to milking cows during summer/autumn.
- The amount of supplement to feed out for 3 weeks when the drought breaks (minimum of 100 kg DM/cow and in a sever drought up to 160 kg DM/cow).
- PD date to identify empties to be culled.
- Herd test dates to identify low producers and high SCC cows.
- Dates for when cows milked OAD.
- Condition score targets and dates for 1st lactation cows (and 2nd lactation cows if not well grown) and for the rest of the herd.

Use weekly farm walks to monitor both farm cover and cow condition score. Update against feed budgets regularly.

Summer Management Action Plan Dated _____

Insert your dates and figures then put on the office wall. The objective being to keep as many cows milking as long as possible without jeopardising next season's production.

Building up feed before it gets dry

Apply Nitrogen to whole farm by this date _____

Application rate of nitrogen N/ha _____

Rotation length by 10 December _____

Rotation length by 10 January _____

There is no advantage going onto a longer round if it is not dry. In a dry summer where nitrogen has been applied a rotation of 26-30 days will be adequate.

How much feed do I have on hand?

Supplements on hand now (A) _____

Supplement required for winter (B) _____

Supplement required for autumn rains (C) _____

A – B -C = Total available to feed out over summer _____

Divided by number of cows
Total feed available per cow _____

Divided by feed required per cow per day
Total days feeding available _____

Summer Crops

Planting date for summer crop _____

Dates nitrogen to be applied to crop _____

Application rate of nitrogen N/ha _____

Destocking

All known culls to be gone by _____

Whole herd pregnancy test date _____

Herd test to identify low producers/High SCC cows _____

Dry off high SCC cows once counts get over _____

Dry off cows once daily litres per cow drop below _____

Cow condition – I will dry off

1st Lactation cows under Condition Score 3 by _____

Cows under Condition Score 3 by _____

1st Lactation cows under Condition Score 3.5 by _____

Cows under Condition Score 3.5 by _____

1st Lactation cows under Condition Score 4 by _____

I will dry off whole herd if there is no rain before _____