

% of all activity in this quarter relevant to the dairy sector



Study Visits

In September the NextGen Dairy Farmers Group undertook a study visit to see some of the most progressive dairy farmers in the UK, including Metcalfe Farms who won the National Milk Records (NMR) Gold Cup for 2018. With regard to current milk prices, the group was focused on cost of production based on pence per litre (PPL).

Click [here](#) to read their report.

Demonstration Site Projects

Increasing utilisation from grazed grass and milk from forage on an all-year round calving (AYR) dairy system

Erw Fawr demonstration site in Holyhead, Anglesey, wants to improve the total yield from forage and grazed grass from their 250-strong all-year-round calving (AYR) Holstein herd. During the autumn of 2019 the farm infrastructure has been mapped and the information entered onto the grass management software, AgriNet. A platometer has been used by farm staff up to the end of November to ensure the last round of grazing by the low yielders allows for a spring wedge ready to turn out again early in March. High yielding cows up to 150 days in-milk will be housed all year round, ensuring valuable and quality grass silage and maize can be utilised efficiently into milk.



Fig 1. Farm infrastructure mapped by Percision Grazing

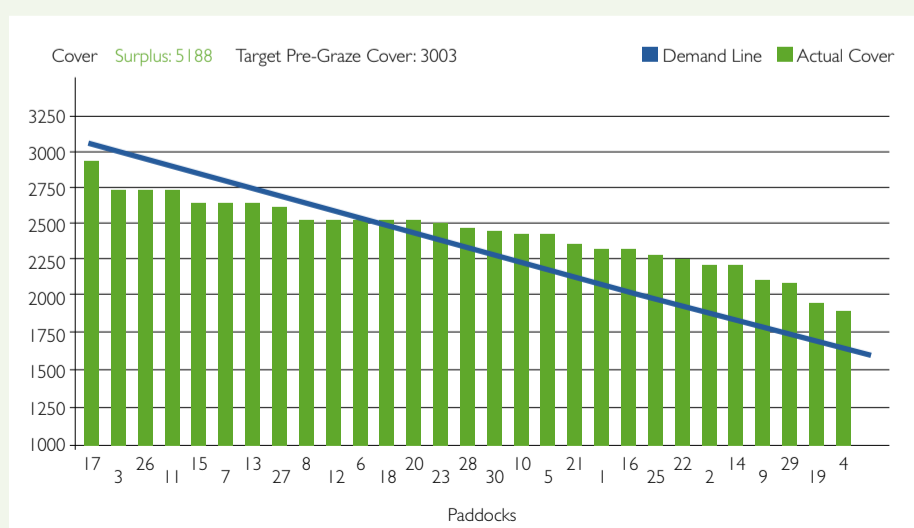


Fig 2. Grass wedge after first farm walk in September

Selecting better replacements within a spring calving grass based herd

Mountjoy demonstration site, Treffgarne, Pembrokeshire would like to drive the genetic improvement of the herd to increase performance. Spring block calving herds tend to make breeding decisions based on fertility in order to ensure as many cows as possible calve within the nine week spring period. This has led to genetic progress for production and health traits being driven solely from the sire's side. Highlighting superior individuals and groups of females to breed for continuous genetic improvement is key to ensuring optimum Kilograms of Milk Solids are produced per cow, without forgetting her need to calve every spring.

The first part of the project has been to genotype all the in-calf heifers to select the individuals to keep and those to sell as surplus. In the past, selection has been based on appearance and calving date but by using the Herd Genetic Report, heifers will be ranked with increased reliability on the Spring Calving Index (£SCI) which is the UK's bespoke index for spring block herds. Together with targeted use of sexed semen on the highest indexing animals, the project intends to demonstrate that genetic merit, which is an AHDB optimal system KPI, will show an increase for average herd £SCI at the end of the three year project.

Evaluating the economics and practicalities of rearing dairy heifers on an upland sheep farm

Llys Dinmael Isaf focus farm near Corwen is an upland sheep farm experienced in rotationally grazing lambs. Their new enterprise is rearing 20 Holstein Friesian dairy heifers to sell after they calve as fresh in-milk heifers at two years of age. Very little is understood about the management of dairy heifers on grass within a highly stocked rotational grazing system, where the main principles of utilisation and management tend to be based on the grazing practices of the mature dairy herd. This project will monitor heifer growth rates against pre and post grazing covers with an aim to better understand how Holstein Friesian heifers can be grazed within a rotational cell grazing system, with the aim of maximizing animal performance on a low-cost feeding regime.

The heifers will be outwintered on fodderbeet and round bale silage during their first winter. The heifer calves have been self-feeding behind an electric fence at the rate of 0.97 metres of fodder beet per day within a 40m wide strip, supplemented by round bale silage fed from a ring feeder.

Average weight of the calves on 16 November was 246kg. Daily liveweight gain averaged 0.89kg DLWG entirely on home-grown forage diet of ad lib fodder beet and round bale silage at 6kg/head/day.



KE Hub

Technical articles produced by the KE HUB;

 OPTIMISING THE DAIRY COW DIET FOR IMPROVED HEALTH

 PUBLIC GOODS AND FARMING

Discussion Groups



Number of Dairy Discussion Groups: 17

Case Study

Anwen Jones, an independent nutritionist, visited a Carmarthen dairy discussion group to look at the topic of feeding dairy cows to enable the farmers to make important nutrition management decisions in order to optimise both the health and performance of the herd. Anwen began discussions on the importance of dry cow nutrition covering:

- The importance of dry cow management
- Ideal cow condition for the dry period
- Dry cow management influence on health of cow at calving
- Calving difficulties, milk fever and retained cleansings related to poor dry cow management and nutrition
- Dry cow management influence on fresh cow dry matter intakes
- Nutrition, vitamins and trace elements for the dry cow

Rumen health risk factors were then discussed and Anwen emphasised the importance of minimising these risks as they can cause ill health to the cow resulting in a decrease in production and fertility performance. Risk factors to the rumen include:

- Acid loading of forage base
- Starch level and degradability
- Forage: Concentrate ratio
- Concentrates feeding method
- Grain processing
- Lying times
- TMR sorting

Anwen focused on acid loading and how this can be prevented. Mixing various silage cuts whilst feeding was discussed at this point also as this is being done at one of the farms, and Anwen emphasised the importance of this in achieving a consistent diet throughout the winter.

The problems encountered with both wet silage and mature silage were then discussed and how each can cause problems to the dairy herd. For example, the mature silage is likely to be lower in D-value and protein and has a higher risk of mould and heating. The wet silage on the other hand can also be a problem in that it may cause a high acid load thus reducing the rumen pH resulting in reduced intakes.

Strategic Awareness Events

25 Events Held with 577 attendees



PDP WORKSHOP



RENEWABLE ENERGY



ACCESSING TECHNICAL ADVICE

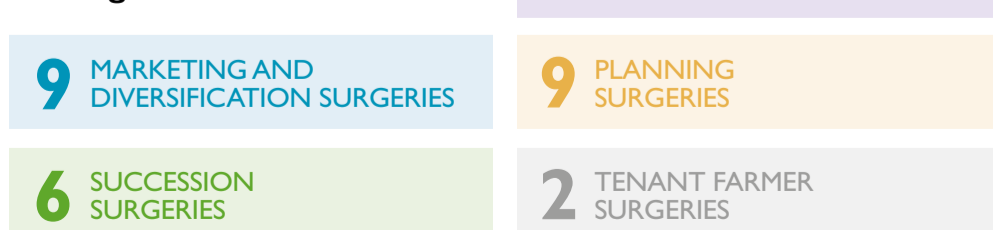
Securing your farm business for FUTURE GENERATIONS – is a joint venture an option?



*Strategic Awareness Event themes are often cross-sectoral that tend to attract farmers from all sectors, including the Dairy sector.

Surgeries

28 Surgeries Held



*Surgeries are cross-sectoral events and a mixture of farmers from all sectors attend, including farmers from the Dairy sector.

Mentoring Programme

90 DAIRY FARMERS currently being mentored



Click [here](#) to access the full Mentor Directory.

Venture

3 NEW DAIRY PROVIDERS **5** NEW DAIRY SEEKERS **6** POTENTIAL DAIRY MATCH ESTABLISHED DURING THE QUARTER

5 DAIRY MATCHES

currently being supported via the Advisory Service

10 new joint ventures established via venture during this period

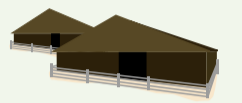
Current opportunities available:

Number of opportunities offered:



4 DAIRY UNITS

Total land area offered:



434 HECTARES (DAIRY UNITS ONLY)

Animal Health & Welfare Workshops

35 WORKSHOPS held with **569** ATTENDEES

Workshops held:

Bovine TB



Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD)

Reducing Dairy Cattle Lameness



Reducing Mastitis in Dairy Cattle

Understanding John's Disease



Training

During this period, **63** instances of face to face training were delivered to the Dairy sector.



E-learning

Some of the e-learning courses completed within this period:

CATTLE PNEUMONIA



CATTLE LAMENESS



SLURRY MANAGEMENT



COLOSTRUM AND CALVES



Click [here](#) to visit the website.

