Farming Connect Dairy Demonstration Sites

ERW FAWR

Demonstration Site: ERW FAWR
- Ceredig Evans and family

Technical Officer: Rhys Davies

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

Introduction to project:

One key aspect that the Evanses want to improve at Erw Fawr is the total yield from forage and grazed grass from their 250-strong all-year-round calving (AYR) Holstein herd. Located within one of Wales' best grass growing areas, cows at Erw Fawr are perfectly situated to utilise this plentiful supply. In the past, Ceredig has run two groups of cows split into high and low yielders around an established paddock system. However, buffer feeding restricted grass intakes and often left higher residuals than the desired 1,500kgDM/ha. With daily paddock allocation being done purely on 'gut' instinct and operated by a team of staff with varied experience in managing cows at grass, there is a big opportunity to improve the assessment, interpretation and utilisation of the grass available.

Project Objectives:

The focus of the project during the autumn of 2019 has been to map the infrastructure and input the grazing platform on AgriNet grass management software. A platemeter 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. Likewise, only quality grazing and concentrate in the parlour will be offered to cows scanned in-calf from March until November. Using baseline studies prepared by Kite Consulting, it is hoped that even in an AYR Holstein herd, increasing yield from grazed grass can be demonstrated through relatively easy practical tweaks in management, grazing behaviour and grass measurement.

Key Performance Indicators set:

- Increase yield from home-grown forage
- Increase utilisation of grazed grass

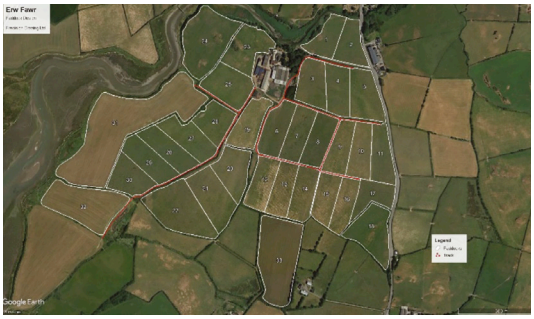

Fig 1. Farm infrastructure mapped by Precision Grazing

TIMELINE AND MILESTONES:

September 2019
- Baseline study
- Map current paddock infrastructure
- AgriNet software setup
- Begin measuring with platemeter
- Soil sampling

November 2019
- House milking herd and close farm's grazing platform
- Using youngstock to manage wedge over winter
- Measure closing cover
- Evaluate staff training needs

February 2020
- Measure opening farm cover
- Plan for turnout - infrastructure and staff training

March 2020
- Turn out low yielding group onto paddock with cover of 2,800kgDM/ha
- Measure and monitor average farm cover (AFC) and growth rate weekly

May 27 2020
- Demonstration Site open day
- Measure grass grown and utilised
- kg of milk solids produced per ha

November 2020
- Project review
- Total grass grown and utilised
- Staff evaluation
- Calculate yield from forage