

Feeding your livestock through the Winter



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- Try to plan ahead a bit to take the guesswork out of winter feeding.
- Get what feed you've got available to you down on paper and work out what your livestock need.
- Make the most of forage; if you need more feed, now's the time to be thinking about it - not when you're down to your last round bale or tonne of cake!

All livestock need energy and protein to survive. Just staying alive uses what's called metabolisable energy for maintenance (ME) measured in Megajoules (MJ) which your livestock get from their feed. On top of the energy for maintenance, they also need energy to grow, produce milk or for pregnancy. Some animals such as a dry cow, need less than others, e.g a milking cow so we need to balance what's available with what they need - this is called feed budgeting and in this factsheet we're considering a Winter feed budget.

These needs have been worked out by nutritionists and more information is available online which you can download to help you do this yourself. Some information on requirements of ewes is available, although information within the sheep sector is being updated. For an overview of annual ME demands see the website for 'Feed planning for cattle and sheep' (see the useful links that have been included at the bottom of this fact sheet).

DOES MY FEED HAVE ENOUGH ENERGY AND PROTEIN?

If it's bought in, the label will tell you how much energy and protein it's got. For home grown forage get it analysed so that you know its energy and protein content.

WORKING IT OUT FOR YOURSELF

Find out how much energy the stock need

Energy required (MJ ME) = Number of animals x daily energy requirement/head (MJ ME) x number of days

Calculate the energy supply from the feed you have available (in MJ ME)

Is there a surplus or deficit (energy balance)?

Energy balance (MJ ME) = Energy supply available through on-farm-feed (MJ ME) – Energy required (MJ ME)

WHAT NOW?

Can you use more home grown feed or store surplus until next year? Could you increase stock numbers? Do you have to buy in more feed, keep stock out on grass for longer or sell stock earlier?

(please see the Farming Connect website for our technical article on this topic for further information and help)

BEEF - <http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns/tools/beef-ration-calculator/>

DAIRY - <https://dairy.ahdb.org.uk/resources-library/technical-information/feeding/feedingplus-section-7-managing-your-feeding>

SHEEP - <http://hccmpw.org.uk/medialibrary/publications/Feeding%20the%20Ewe.pdf>

<http://www.nutrientmanagement.org/what-we-do/tools/feed-planning-for-sheep-and-cattle/>

