

This Summer has certainly been a scorcher; with record temperatures and almost non-existent rainfall leading to the driest and joint hottest Summer since 1976!

With another hot weekend to start September the weather forecast seemed to be pointing at an 'Indian Summer' with more soaring temperatures and little rain. This may not be the case however, as forecasts now show the weather as being a bit more changeable than previously thought!

Nevertheless, with the prospect of this Summer hanging on for longer than usual I thought I'd discuss a few of the challenges that have arisen over the last few months and what measures can be taken to best cope in the coming weeks/months.

## Summer Recap

**Food and Water** - we've seen that for many of you buffer feeding has been essential to combat the poor grass quality over the last few months with some even having to open up their Winter reserves. Good quality, clean ad-lib water has also been a must and thankfully yields have stayed high for most.

Going forward efficiency is probably going to be the key word as food supplies have been dented earlier than most would have wanted; this will inevitably lead to increased costs. Therefore reviewing a few areas might just help to make that bit of silage go the extra mile!



On a recent trip Nick Britten spotted a herd of cows soaking up some Sun on the beach!

- **Smaller group sizes:** this can help reduce standing times in the collecting yards for dairy cows as well as helping you to manage the (smaller) group's diet better. For example, do you split your cows up according to yield?
- **Vitamin/mineral supplementation:** the quality of your grass will have been damaged from the dry heat resulting in potential deficiencies in vitamin E, selenium and cobalt. It is important to assess if any of these nutrients are lacking through feed analysis and testing groups of animals.
- **Salt:** where some rain and lower temperatures are forecast this month, salt requirements will still be increased so salt blocks/licks etc. could be of real benefit.
- **Clamp upkeep:** this is always a talking point on farm and probably now more than ever is of vital importance. Losses from the clamp face due to uneven edges/gaps etc. can be huge and especially important if you've already opened one up that you were saving for the Winter.

**Fertility** - generally speaking the last few months have seen a lot of Dairies experience poor fertility as pregnancy rates have dropped. The hot weather has a fair amount of responsibility for this as cattle are less likely to show signs of oestrus in the heat. This lack of bulling behaviour happens even if the diet meets the cow's energy requirements.

You would hope that as temperatures drop we should see an improvement but remember there are a range of aids available for heat detection including quick, cheap and easy tools like stickers and tail paints.

**Flies and Eyes (and Mastitis!)** - it's fair to say every Summer brings with it the usual chat of fly control; but certainly, these last few months have really been a challenge for some who've struggled to keep the flies off their livestock. Infectious eye disease and mastitis are two of the most talked about problems associated with flies and are seen as indirect losses. There are also direct losses through reduced growth rates, lower milk yields and hide damage.

The potential for another 'heatwave' means that you can't take your foot off the pedal when thinking about fly control.

Products like 'Spot-On' are effective but, when used on their own, don't always get the job done. It's important to try and reduce the available environment for the flies:

- Using an alternative to straw as bedding for housed cattle.
- Keep stock away from wet, marshy areas.
- Chemical treatment of areas around the farm where flies rest; for example, window frames and lights.
- Treat or remove manure piles, slurry pits and dirty bedding.

If treatment is required for bad eyes, remember that Draxxin is now licensed to treat cases of New Forest Eye (although **not licensed** for use in animals producing milk for human consumption). This is a handy alternative to the usual treatments, especially in youngstock.

**Lungworm and gut worms** - to minimize losses to Winter rations many might be thinking of extending their Summer grazing period. Remember to check if any worming boluses/treatments are close to running out before the cows come in. This is especially important for lungworm as the risk of infection in unvaccinated stock remains high during September and October.

So, as the month unfolds we may end up with Mediterranean heat or be skiing down snowdrifts - all I know is that as long as Ed Bailey turns up to work in shorts, it's still Summer!

All the best,

Ben



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