

Beef from grass event

Matt House has been involved with the Beef from Grass project for the last two grazing seasons and has made significant improvements to his grazing management. This has led to a 40% increase in output per hectare. AHDB recently held an event at his farm to show the progress he has made.

He is currently grazing 121 Aberdeen Angus-cross suckler cows plus calves, 90 bulling heifers and 75 replacement heifers on a rotational grazing system on two-day shifts. The target is to increase the herd to 300 suckler cows with no housing.



Matt has increased the stocking rate from 1.62 livestock units per hectare (LSU/ha) to 2.33. He is currently selling forage as he is no longer growing cereals in preparation for an increase in cow numbers.

During the project, Matt has been mentored by Catherine Pickford, a dairy farmer who farms next door. She runs 300 spring-calving NZ Jersey x Friesian cows on a once-a-day milking system. Around 14 years ago she visited Ireland and as a result altered to her current system 12 years ago. Her involvement in various discussion groups has helped developed her confidence and provides a constant challenge.



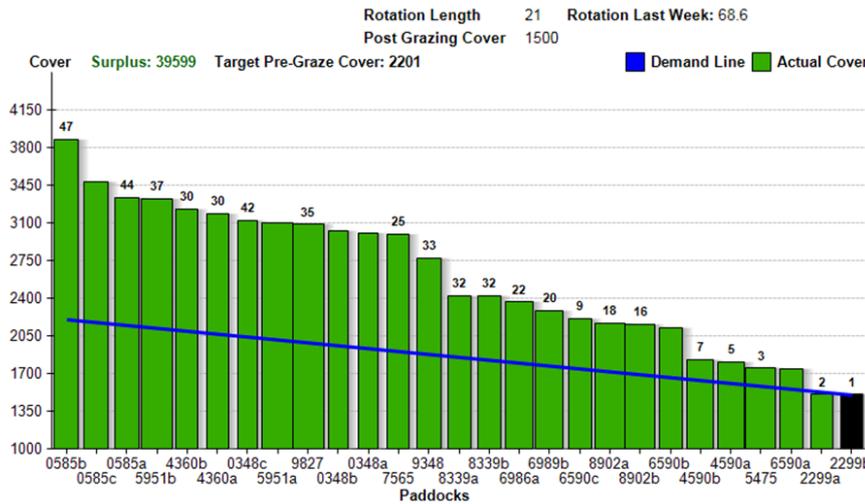
Matt's replacement heifers come from Catherine's herd, which provides extra assurances that they can graze well. Matt spoke of how he has always appreciated seeing Catherine rotationally grazing her cattle on similar land and has learned from her experiences. Catherine was involved in Matt's decision to out-winter cattle, with 350 cattle out wintered this year. A saving of around £50 per cow has been calculated.

His out-wintering system involves strip grazing Italian ryegrass (IRG) with additional silage bales. Stubble turnips have been used previously and the switch to IRG is to improve ground conditions during the winter and it gives an opportunity for an early cut of silage next spring. The land will then be reseeded with a medium-term grass ley.

Currently, calves are growing at around 1.3 kg liveweight per day and have been creep fed from September this year following growth rates dropping in early autumn in 2016. Around 1kg of creep per head has been allocated.

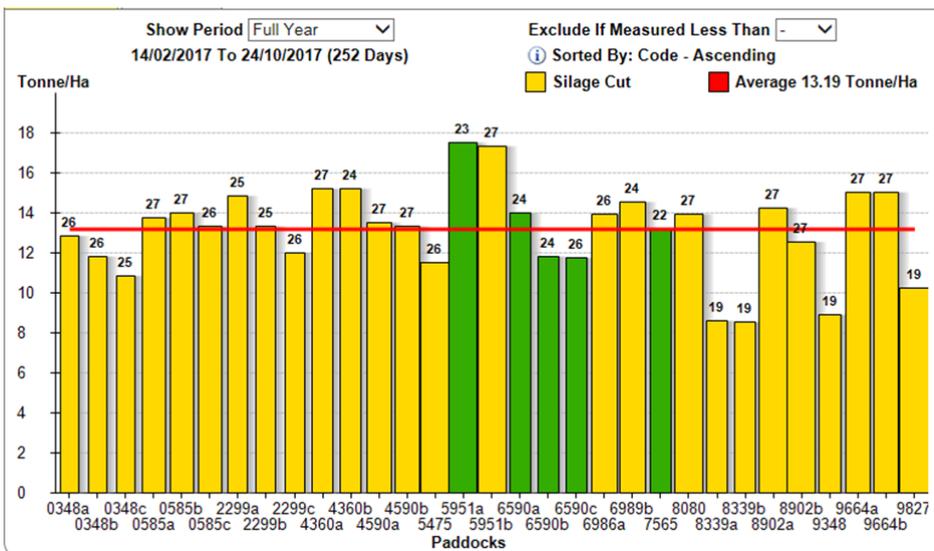
Matt is currently recording grass covers regularly and using Agrinet to help make decisions. He has started shutting up paddocks ready for next spring and cattle will be off the grazing platform by early December. The figures below are taken from Matt's file. Beef farmers with feed wedges and figures on grass grown is still very rare and part of the aim of the Beef from Grass project was to understand how they could be used on English beef farms.

Figure 1: The feed wedge for the farm on 25/10/17



Matt has been stockpiling grass for extended grazing into December and has also allocated fields for grazing in March as some of the cattle come off the out-wintering system.

Figure 2: Total production (tonnes of dry matter) per paddock



This figure shows the variation in performance in paddocks and can be used to identify fields that need more attention, eg soil structure and nutrients. Matt's farm grew an average of 13.19 tonnes of dry matter per hectare, which is impressive. His utilisation of that grass is likely to be 75-80% due to the use of paddock grazing systems.

For more information on grazing strategies, see the BRP manual

[Planning Grazing Strategies for Better Returns.](#)