

Moving to a forage-based system

Tim May, Hampshire

Tim May runs 1700 mule ewes including 500 ewe lambs lambing outdoors in May and around 150 yearling cattle at Pitt Hall Farm, Hampshire. The farm, which was previously all arable, extends to 1,000ha (2,450 acres). However, 360ha (882 acres) of herbal leys were sown last May.

Tim has just recently taken over ownership of the flock from Rd. Yann Le Du who has stayed on to consult Tim and help with the handover.

“We are currently running the flock on an all home-grown forage system and our aim is to maintain that. The bigger target is to increase overall farm output by using the benefits of crop rotation and a mixed farming system to improve soil health, increasing forage and cereal yields.” Yann Le Du says.

Investment

Along with the herbal leys, 90ha (220 acres) of cereals were undersown with red clover for lamb finishing. Another 90ha (220 acres) of stubble turnips and fodder beet is being grown to provide winter-feed cover. Investment has been made in the infrastructure with the aim of increasing forage production and utilisation.

All grassland on the farm has been fenced with semi-permanent three-strand tensile mains electric fence. Internal temporary electric fences are used to adjust the grazing area to match available forage to stock requirements.

System



The ewes are grouped in numbers of about 150 by age and number of lambs scanned and set-stocked for lambing. They are rotationally grazed with moves every three to four days. Some cattle will also be rotationally grazed and moved every one to three days through the grazing season.

Tim and Yann will monitor sward heights both before and after grazing to closely match estimated feed supply and demand.

“As we collect more information we will get a better idea of actual feed supply and once we get our eye in we may not have to physically measure pastures as often,” Yann says.

Once weaned, in August/September lambs will be moved onto grass and clover and the under-sown red clover swards, before moving on to turnips after Christmas.



For more information download the EBLEX BRP+ document on [chicory and plantain](#).

Tim is a recent Nuffield Farming Scholar
– read his report [‘Understanding and implementing sustainability’](#).