

Focussing on improving grass utilisation

Adam Quinney farms a herd of stabiliser beef cattle near Redditch. Over the last year he has seen first hand the value of rotational grazing and is investing in fencing and water troughs on his beef and sheep farm.

Adam separated his young heifers into two groups last year – one was set stocked and the other was rotationally grazed. The heifers in the rotationally grazed group grew an extra 0.5kg per day over the grazing season compared to the group that were set stocked.



He also ran the late spring calving cows on a rotational field based system and seen grass quality improve with less topping required.

So what's he doing next?

The fields on his farm are currently too big to get good grass utilisation and control, so he is trialling splitting a field with a section of permanent fence, water troughs and hot wire. A permanent fence will run through the middle of the field from which reels can be attached from the new fence line to the original boundary fencing. The group moves around the field in segments. He is using a single strand of wire with 8,000 volts and accepts that some calves will move through. The permanent fence runs along the line of a busy footpath through the fields, so it is planned that walkers will be able to walk either side of the fence depending on where the cattle are.

The aim is to have groups of around 50 cows and calves in 2ha sections, they will move on a daily basis. Artificial insemination is used on the farm and this may prove a challenge, but Adam is hoping to experiment with a mobile feed head locking barrier. The main trial field is 15ha, the area available to the group will be adjusted by shutting up the new grass seed area of the field for silage. The position of the new permanent fencing and the use of temporary fencing does mean that cutting for silage does not involve dealing with lots of separate paddocks.

Adam will monitor performance of cows and calves with his ambitious aim of achieving one tonne of weaned weight of calf per ha. It is likely that liveweight gain of cows over the grazing period will also be included. He is the process of establishing a discussion group with other local beef farmers also monitoring and reviewing performance.

Take a look at [BRP Beef and Sheep Manual 1](#) for more information on Improving Pasture for Better Returns