

Beef from Grass—Rotational grazing and maintaining quality

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Graham Parks is one of the mentor farmers involved in the Beef from Grass project. The project aims to highlight the potential of grass and forages for beef cattle production and will provide practical guidance on how beef producers can improve their current grazing management.

Graham has recently taken on a new rented holding of approximately 121 ha at Overbank Farm, near Macclesfield. His system will continue to be based on calf to beef, with 200 calves a year being purchased and reared to finishing at 24 to 30 months of age. These are a mix of dairy-cross-Angus, Hereford and Shorthorn cattle, with the aim being to sell premium beef to major supermarkets, through Scotbeef, Dunbia and Woodheads.

Setting up Overbank Farm for rotational grazing

Graham has used rotational grazing with great success in the past and is keen to set up this system on the new farm. His aim is to re-fence the majority of the farm with either one or two strands of high-tensile plain wire, which he will connect to a mains energiser. The majority of Graham's fields are 3-4 ha in size. His aim is to split the fields into two, which the cattle will graze for no longer than three days.

Paddock layout

It is important to think about paddock layout and how to split fields with temporary electric fences. This not only aids movement in and out of the paddocks, but it can also reduce poaching during wetter periods of the year. The ideal paddock is rectangular with a depth:width ratio of 2:1.

Managing grass in times of plenty

Inevitably, rotational grazing will produce more grass through better utilisation and better growth. This can cause problems, particularly at times of peak grass growth.

The secret to rotational grazing is the ability to be flexible. Excess grass can be taken for silage when covers are too high to graze. This not only maintains grazing quality for cattle, but it also produces high-quality silage for the youngstock in the winter. These silage aftermaths will then quickly recover to become part of the grazing platform.



Summary

These practices maximise utilisation of the grass but more importantly, on a beef farm, lead to greater growth rates and increased output per ha.

Information on drawing up a grazing plan can be found in the Better Returns Manual [Planning Grazing Strategies for Better Returns](#).

More information on the Beef from Grass project can be found on the AHDB Beef & Lamb [website](#), or sign up to the Grazing Club E-newsletter.