



DBL Buying Group

Welcome to our 125th edition of the newsletter. Included in this month's newsletter are articles on:

- Silage Sheets
- Commodities
- Breeding for Efficiency
- Gallagher Electric Fencing
- Efficient Use of Slurry
- Wholecrop Options
- Keeping Feet Clean

Your feedback and comments are most welcome. If clarification is required, please contact the article contributor or for more articles and news visit www.fcgagric.com.



Edited by Gerard Finnan of David Bardgett Ltd and The Farm Consultancy Group
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To visit our website



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Silage Sheets

By the time you read this I will have announced our silage sheet prices for year to the group. We can also supply silage sheets to non-members at great prices, but for the best prices you need to be a group member!

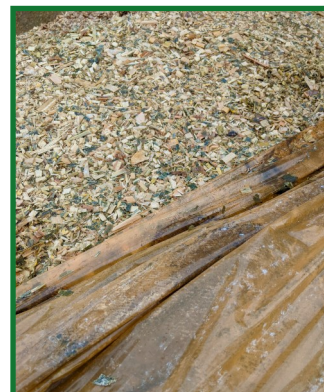
We will again this year be supplying Visqueen sheets as our main sheet, along with clingfilm, however if you want a more "technical" oxygen barrier sheet we can supply a variety of different options including Oxy Seal, the all in one O2 barrier silage film, the O2 Barrier 2in1 silage sheet, or the full range of Silostop products, including Silostop Orange & Silostop MAX.

A number of group, and non-group, clients used the different Silostop products last year with great effect, and the feedback was extremely positive with many commenting on how little, or no waste, they had on their clamps after using the Silostop products.

While these sheets may have a higher headline price than the combined price of a traditional black sheet & clingfilm can you afford not to be using them? After the huge investment made each year to ensile your grass, or maize etc., you should be doing your best to ensile it and ensure the best return possible on investment, and with little or no waste with an oxygen barrier sheet, when sheeted correctly, can you afford to be just throwing that feed away?

I have personally seen one client switch to the Silostop MAX sheet and not only were the staff happier because it was easier to put on the pit, but also the waste went from the top 12 inches of the pit to virtually none!

Update 12/03/21 – Yesterday I was on one group member's farm that had just used the Silostop Orange & Supacova UV on their maize, and no black plastic at all, and the maize looked fantastic. See the picture with this article. This was taken yesterday afternoon on a maize pit harvested autumn 2020 that had just been uncovered and looked as fresh as it had been put in with no spoilage & no heating! A fantastic result with reduced plastic usage.



The way forward seems to be use Silostop MAX on multi-opened pits, i.e. your grass silage pit if you are using it for a multicut system, because it is tougher and can handle being abused more as it is taken on and off the pit, this then still needs a cover of some kind over the top. Then for pits that are only used once, i.e. your wholecrop or maize pits use the Silostop Orange and a Supacova UV.

When asked yesterday the member said it was the least waste they had seen on a silage pit in 15 years, and would definitely be using the system again. A great result for the silage and a great result for the environment with less plastic used.

As well as silage sheets we can also supply covers & gravel bags etc. With Silostop offering a free pack of 50 gravel bags for every cover ordered, while stocks last.

Please contact Andrew on 07717 442888
or email andrew@dblbuyinggroup.co.uk for your requirements.



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Breeding For Efficiency - On Farm Experience

A spring-calving herd I work with, recently started weighing their milking cows. They have then used this data, combined with 305-day milk solids production, to determine the efficiency of each cow expressed as kilos of milk solids, as a percentage of liveweight.

This will then be used as a primary selection tool for targeting sexed dairy semen to the most efficient cows.

The data was very revealing and changed the farmer's and his staff's perception of which are the best cows in the herd!

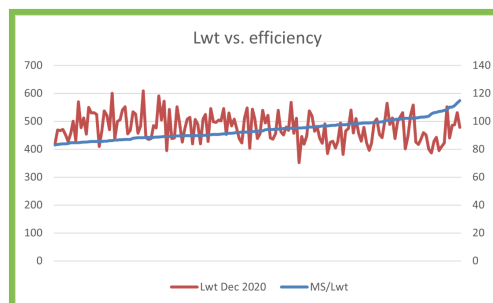
Cows were weighed at drying off (in future, a mid-lactation weight will be used). Liveweight ranged from 352 kgs to 732 kgs, with an average of 500 kgs. Milk solids production ranged from 218 kgs to 600 kgs, with an average of 458 kgs.

Efficiency ranged from 39% (a 574 kg cow giving 222 kgs milk solids) to 120% (a 407 kg cow giving 489 kgs milk solids). The cows are flat rate fed and run as one herd, so no differences can be attributed to feeding.

The top 10% averaged 106% and the bottom 10% averaged 56%. The best cows in this herd are nearly twice as efficient as the worst!!!

We also plotted efficiency against liveweight, this showed a slight negative correlation – i.e. the smaller cows in the herd are slightly more efficient. This herd is a Jersey x Holstein Friesian mix. The correlation has given the farmer renewed confidence in using the Jersey breed as part of his breeding programme.

Alongside health and fertility data, and with two years' experience giving confidence in sexed semen, this promises to be a very powerful and simple tool for herd improvement.



To see how you can improve your dairy efficiency and profits, contact Tom on 07496 760242 or email tommalleson@fcgagric.com



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Commodities Update (8th March)

Over the last month the pound has strengthened against the dollar, at one point seeing a 4 cent increase, but this has now fallen back to just being up a cent on this time last month. Against the euro it has also strengthened and is now about 2 cents up on this time last month. Much of the reason for this increase has been on the back of the impressive vaccination levels seen here in the UK compared to Europe, and much of the rest of the world.

Oil (Brent Crude) has again risen over the last month with a further increase of \$10/barrel. Latest GDT results saw a massive +15% increase in prices. Over the last six months there has now only been one negative result of -2.0% in early November. The GDT Price Index was last at this level in March 2014. Butter, Skim and Whole milk powders are all at 5-year highs, with Cheddar continuing to rise. Chinese demand & rising global feed costs are behind this jump, and with New Zealand past peak production for this season it is unlikely that prices are likely to see a fall in the short term.

Milk Powder - On the back of the increase in GDT Prices there has been an increase in the cost of skim milk powders, sometimes as much as £100/t depending on the volume of skim powder in the product.

Feed - In the last month cereal prices have held relatively steady, but soya has seen a fall but rape an increase.

Fertiliser - Prices have continued to increase with demand and rising gas prices driving the increase, though the strengthening pound has helped ease some of the increases.

Unprotected urea is currently around the £315-320/t with replacement values around the £350/t mark as we move further into spring, DAP is now nearing the £420/t mark with replacement prices closer to £460/t moving forward.

CF have for a limited time cut £10/t on Nitram & Double Top prices for March delivery only.

Otherwise with so many orders being left late, and boats arriving late due to COVID there is a problem for deliveries. If you have yet to order your fertiliser you will struggle to get delivery before April now.

For an up to date quote on your specific requirements, please contact Andrew on 07717 442888 or email andrew@dblbuyinggroup.co.uk



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Spring is HereAlmost?

With days becoming longer and a number of farmers letting out their animals, its times like these that you need to ensure you have all your electric fencing needs covered.

DBL are proud to be partners with the world's leading vendor of Electric fencing – Gallagher. We can provide these quality products at a price that will pleasantly surprise you.

And don't forget, we have a special introductory offer, if you spend over £100 on any Gallagher electric fencing products between now and 30th April, **you will receive a keyring electric fence tester and a beanie for free** as a friendly welcome. Also, if you purchase an S10, S16, S20, S40 or S100 solar unit, **you will receive a free earth stake!**

Gallaghers solar fencing units are the market leader. So, if you need anything from the Gallagher range (electric fencing, energisers, weighing and EID plus toys for all the future farmers out there) then give us a call at DBL.



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Efficient Use of Slurry

With fertiliser prices rising in excess of 30% compared to last year, taking account of slurry and FYM applied to land is even more important to ensure that you do not use more purchased inorganic fertiliser than you need to. This should be coupled with up-to-date soil samples to ensure you target the slurry and FYM where it is most needed to reduce the requirement for purchased phosphate and potash.

The availability of the nutrients to the following crop from FYM applications does not vary that much regardless of the time of application. There is more variation however with slurry as the table below shows:

Time	Available N	Available P	Available K
Spring	0.91	0.6	2.3
Summer	0.65	0.6	2.3
Autumn	0.78	0.6	2.3
Winter	0.65	0.6	2.3

As the table shows, the nitrogen available is highest from spring applications and lowest in summer and winter. The available phosphate and potash do not vary during the seasons.

To put this into more practical terms, if you applied 2500 gallons per acre of slurry on grassland, it would put on the following nutrients that are available to the crop:

Time	N Supplied	P Supplied	K Supplied
Spring	10	7	26
Summer	7	7	26
Autumn	9	7	26
Winter	7	7	26

*figures at kgs of nutrient per acre

On this basis, in a normal grazing routine of applying 50 kgs / acre of 34.5%N fertiliser, which provides 17.25 kgs N per acre, you would be able to reduce this rate if slurry were applied to 21 kgs per acre in the spring and 30 kgs per acre in the summer. The potential saving on 100 acres equates to £770 per application of slurry, just for the Nitrogen, plus the benefits of P and K.

To discuss a fertiliser plan for your farm to ensure you maximise the use of nutrients from slurry, contact Phil Cooper who is FACTS qualified on 07798 673665 or email pcooper@fcgagric.com



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Wholecrop Options

With spring almost upon us, for those looking for different forage options for the coming winter, what have you considered? While many have in the past grown maize (prices currently available), over the last couple of years there has been a stronger move towards wholecrop.

In the past this was considered a poor man's maize, but is it? Personally, I think it makes sense, especially if you are an autumn calving herd around the 8,000-litre mark on a local cheese contract, because you are looking to drive solids rather than milk production.

However, have you looked at the different options available for wholecropping? The obvious ones are wheat or barley. Personally, I do not have a preference to which because they both analyse very similar, so it is what works best for you, your farm and your rotation. The real difference however is that the wheat will provide you with a better volume of forage to ensile.

Have you looked at different options? With protein prices rising in the last six months, is it worth considering a mix to try and improve the proteins grown on farm?

Through our seed supplier we can as standard supply mixes of peas & barley, peas, barely & oats and peas, barely & vetch. On top of this we would be able to supply any bespoke mix that you would like.

As an example of adding a protein source to the mix, I have a client that for a number of years has grown straight spring barley for his wholecrop source. He had averaged over the years 10.2 ME & 10% CP, whereas last year they grew barley & vetch which analysed 10.6 ME & 13.4% CP, so an increase of nearly 3.5% CP which meant they were able to feed less protein on farm this winter, and therefore make a saving, with protein prices rising.

Please contact Andrew on 07717 442888 or email andrew@dblbuyinggroup.co.uk to discuss Spring seed options and pricing.



Andrew Jones

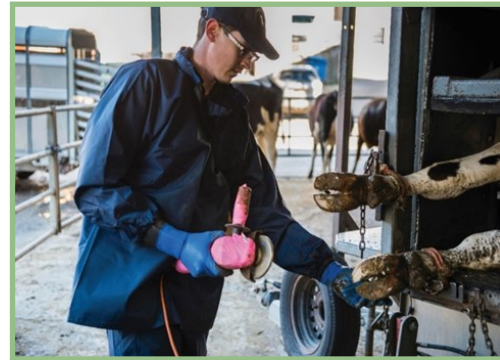
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Keeping Feet Clean

Stinky feet are not desirable as my wife often reminds me!! Keeping the feet of your livestock clean at this time of year can be a real challenge.



Footbathing is important all year round, but now more than ever. Here are a few pointers to keep your animal's feet healthy:

- Rinsing feet in the parlour, or pre-bathing will greatly increase the effectiveness of the treatment footbath.
- Formalin (4% concentration) and Copper Sulphate (5% concentration) are most popular and effective choices to put in a footbath.
- Keep areas before and after footbath clean.
- One cow, per one litre of footbath is recommended by AHDB. 200 litre footbaths should be changed after 200 cow passes.
- Depth of 12cm to cover the whole hoof. Length of 3m is ideal to allow two steps of each foot. Width of two cows to improve cow flow is preferred.
- Copper Sulphate mixes better if added after mixing in a bucket of warm water. All treatments are more effective in warmer water.
- Make the task of refilling the footbath an easy routine job so that it gets done more regularly.

Some of these pointers might not always be practical, but effective footbathing in my opinion can have the biggest impact on reducing lameness in your animals. Get your footbath out, then get your foot trimmer out!



Not your typical footbath!!!

Contact Synergy Farm Health on 01935 83682 or office@synergyfarmhealth.com for further advice on your livestock feet issues or to avail of their discounted service to group members.



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