



May newsletter, with an update on grass growth at two of the G4ce farms.

With high day time temperatures and warm soils grass growth rocketed in April. At Hendy the grass on the highest fields (1,200ft above sea level) reached a sward height of 4 cm allowing the silage land to be shut up 3 weeks earlier than usual. Rapid grass growth enabled a new grass red clover ley to be cut for silage in mid April at Bodrida (100ft above sea level) yielding 13.5 bales/ha.



Grass Quality

The young leafy grass on both farms was very dry allowing the ewes and lambs to maximise intakes. This produced grass capable of maintaining lamb growth rates of up to 300g/day. New leys on both farms were higher quality with reference to both energy and protein levels.

Bodrida	Energy and Protein
Old Ley	11.6 MJ Energy, 20.1% crude protein
New Ley	11.9 MJ Energy, 21.3% crude protein
Hendy	
Old Ley	11.2 MJ Energy, 21% crude protein
New Ley	11.7 MJ Energy, 24.4% crude protein

Grass Yields

Grass yields were again better in the new leys than the old, despite the dry conditions which will have reduced the potential growth in April, particularly at Bodrida, providing further evidence of the yield benefits of reseeding.

Bodrida	Yield kg DM/ha
Old Ley	1,715
New Ley	2,305
Hendy	Yield kg DM/ha
Old Ley	2,521
New Ley	3,033

Monitoring Sward Height

When grass is growing rapidly it is important to monitor height at least once a week so that you can respond quickly to changes in grass height by altering the stocking rate. This is the key to reducing grass waste and will enable you to maintain grass at the correct height to optimise livestock growth rates and grass quality.



Sward Height: Your Grazing Question

Q: At what sward height should I aim to graze my sheep and beef cattle in the spring?

A: Sheep

When sheep are continuously grazed aim to keep the grass at 4cm and don't let it get longer than 6cm as the lambs won't grow any faster with more grass. If sward height exceeds 6cm graze with cattle or close up for big bale silage.

When sheep are rotationally grazed the pre-graze height should be 8-10cm and post graze height 4-5cm.



Glossary:

DM: dry matter
MJ: mega joules
HA: hectare

Parasite Control

Even on high quality grazing at the correct height parasites will affect livestock growth rates. For instance, the best control method for nematodiosis is to avoid grazing ewes and lambs on pasture used for pre-weaning lambs the previous year, or ideally the previous two years. Forecasts of parasite risks can be found by following the link below and control measures should be discussed with your veterinary surgeon: <http://www.nadis.org.uk/Current%20Bulletins/Parasite%20Forecast.pdf>.

A: Beef Cattle



In a continuous grazing system aim to graze lactating suckler cows and growing/finishing cattle at a sward height of 5-6cm, from turn out until the end of May. If grass height gets to above 8cm restrict grazing with an electric fence. The ungrazed buffer can be used for a silage cut or for grazing if the drought affects grass growth.

Where cattle are rotationally grazed an ideal pre-graze paddock height is 12cm with cattle moving to a fresh paddock when the grass height drops to 7-8cm.

Dry suckler cows should be grazed on grass around 4cm to avoid them gaining too much weight in the dry period.

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The Red Meat Development Programme is delivered by Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC) on behalf of Farming Connect. For further information, ring 01970 625050 or visit www.hccmpw.org.uk

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