

MAXIMISE HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE WITH THE RUMEN FRIENDLY APPROACH

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With the farming world on alert that the forage shortage could have serious short and long term effects for farmers across the country, Harbro are on hand to offer the best advice to maintain performance at this time.

We're currently working with customers to assess forage stocks and develop individual herd rations designed to make the most of the feed materials available. One key piece of advice that we're giving farmers is that there are safe ways of feeding higher concentrates when forage is limited and the cost of production is no more than feeding higher levels of forage.

Because milk yield is driven by energy, the higher the energy density of the ration the more milk you can produce. So, although there is a place for high quality forages in these rations, for the typical UK dairy farm, concentrates will always provide more energy than any home-grown forage. For this reason, the more concentrates you can safely feed, the higher your milk yield will be, the more money you will make the and the higher your feed efficiency.

We would recommend that farmers seek advice before making such changes to their rations as there are a multitude of variables that need to be considered before a tailored feed programme is designed.

The most important consideration when running low forage rations is to ensure that the concentrates being fed are as safe as possible without sacrificing energy supply by relying on low energy fibre feeds.

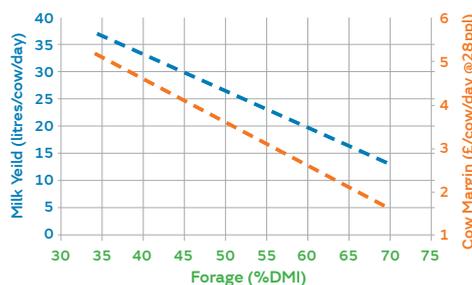
In our experience, the only way to maximise performance on a low forage ration is to use high levels of an alkaline feed such as Maxammon grain, which is not only high in energy and protein (16% on a DM basis) but also has a pH of 9 that helps buffer the rumen and significantly reduce the risk of acidosis.

Another useful tool we use to assess the current situation on farm is Milk Monitor. By regularly collecting data and analysing trends, the programme allows us to measure herd financial and milk performance and identify measures that can be implemented to improve performance and ultimately profitability. This is all done at the same time as promoting the health and well being of the cow, an approach that we call 'Rumen Friendly.'

Get in touch to find out more about how you can maximise performance on farm using a high concentrate ration: **01888 545200** www.harbro.co.uk



Greg Leishman,
Harbro Dairy Project
Manager



Graph shows the effect of forage, as a percentage of dry matter intake on milk yield and cow margin in the UK dairy herd.

MAXIMISING HEALTH AND PROFIT USING THE MAXAMMON APPROACH

"Since introducing Maxammon we have seen a reduction in bought in feed as well as a reduction in acidosis, cudballs and loose cows. Improvements have been seen in milk solids, foot health, fertility and general condition."

Tom Neill, dairy farmer, Northumberland, Arol Hyslop, Harbro dairy specialist.



Financial improvement:
£18.82/head/month
£4,705/herd/month



CALF SUCCESS AT CARSKERDO

For the Wilsons at Carskerdo Farm in Fife, the dilemmas facing them a few years ago were no different from any other dairy business. The family had long been involved in dairying having moved from East Kilbride to Carskerdo in November 1995, with the cows following in May 1996.

A long and hard evaluation of the business was made, asking "Do we expand or get out?" The decision to keep going and expand numbers was made in the spring of 2013 and on the back of that, many key improvements were made. The 16 x 16 herringbone parlour was replaced with a 40 point rotary parlour on a greenfield site. New cubicles were added taking accommodation for cows to a target number of 400.

Two years later, individual calf pens - manufactured from recycled plastic - were introduced.

The move to individual pens was made purely down to health reasons. An automatic calf feeder had been used in the past but it became a vector for spread of infection and many of the calves quickly contracted pneumonia.

In my mind, calves are the most important part of your dairy operation. If you don't have them - you don't have a future

"The loss of calves was soul destroying for us. We went right off the feeder, we could never go back to it," says Pat Wilson who along with Kamca Rackacova looks after the calves.

Since the move to individual pens, losses have been minimal. The calves still have nose to nose contact but no access to suck navels, etc. "They are far healthier and happier," commented Pat.

Strict attention is paid to hygiene with milk being mixed in a machine and buckets which are all kept scrupulously clean.

"It is really important at this time. Calves can cope with ailments individually but if they get a few at once, it really can knock them back. We really want to give them the best start possible and reduce the risk of contamination, especially now we are using sexed semen."

Colostrum is fed for the first four days and then calves are encouraged to get sucking, trying them first with clean fingers. As soon as this is established, they move onto milk. The calves are fed on Buttercup Bloom milk replacer. "They progress really well on it," says Pat.



Stuart Cameron, Harbro Regional Dairy Sales Manager,
Pat Wilson, Carskerdo Farm, Mhairi Strang, Harbro Calf Specialist

Milk is fed for the first six weeks when they are weaned gradually and transition on to Buttercup Calf Starter Pellets which is fed up to 12 weeks, thereafter, moving to Buttercup Calf Rearer Nuts.

Through a low temperature drying process, the protein in Bloom has improved absorption rates and the higher protein level aids improved frame development.

Features of the Buttercup range include Evo, a unique blend of natural plant extracts which has been shown to reduce stress and increase intakes by directly stimulating the key 'pleasure' areas in the brain.

Calf Starter and Calf Rearer are manufactured using a unique 'Rumen Friendly Concept' process. This incorporates cut grain in the pellet to provide scratch factor in the rumen to stimulate early development of rumen papillae and good rumen function. Good sources of digestible fibre help stimulate rumination leading to a stable rumen pH, increased intake and improved performance.

"The calves do really well on the Harbro feed, they bloom, they grow, they thrive." Pat readily admits that she "would not take the risk of trying other feeds." Her motto is "if it ain't broke don't fix it!"

The aim at Carskerdo is to rear them to be able to calve down at 24 months of age, assessing by both weight and size.

Key to achieving this is regular weighing of calves and as part of their management, Carskerdo has joined the Calf+ Monitor Scheme. Launched by Harbro in 2015, it aims to provide an insight into heifer performance and to help pinpoint where management can be improved.

In its first full year, almost 450 calves on 30 farms were weighed monthly from birth through pre-weaning and the data recorded. Enrolling in the scheme is voluntary and the units involved use milk powder and feed compounds from Harbro and a wide range of other manufacturers.

The initial findings show average growth rates in black and white heifers ranged from just 0.44kg a day, on one farm, to more than double that rate at 0.84kg/day on another.

It was also found that almost 70% of the animals across all farms failed to reach daily liveweight gains of 0.75-0.8kg/day - the target growth rate needed for a Holstein to achieve first calving by 24 months at 630kg liveweight pre calving.

"We have done some weighing in the past. Through Calf+ Monitor, we will be able to make sure they are growing as they should." says Pat Wilson.



"Some, with lower growth rates, are taking up to 30 months to first calving, and that's six months of extra housing and maintenance feeding costs before they start producing," says Mhairi Strang, Harbro calf specialist.

"We know that it is possible to make big improvements here because it is well documented that early feed conversion rates are optimal and strong growth rates in the young calf have a knock-on effect on lifetime yields.

"The goal now is to bring that knowledge into practice and help the whole group to lift its performance to get closer to first calving at 24 months," Mhairi says.

The survey includes a measure of what milk powder concentrations are being fed, colostrum provision and quality, a ▶

cleanliness score and an overview of the housing provided. The main message from this was the importance of colostrum provision.

“We did find that farms which focused on good quality colostrum provision, as close to birth as possible, had the strongest performance.”

Explaining how information is shared among the group, Mhairi says the results are sent out every month and each farm receives its data. Also provided are the results for all of the other farms but this is listed anonymously to protect the privacy of the participants, she stressed.

“For the farmers involved, it gives an insight into how their colleagues were doing and helped them focus on what improvements could be made. For us as dairy specialists, it provides an opportunity to identify best practice and pass it on to lift the whole group,” she added.

Along with Mhairi, Harbro Sales Manager Stuart Cameron is a regular visitor to Carskerdo, providing Harbro dairy costings for the business and is “a sounding board to bounce ideas off”.

It is common on farms for young stock to be looked after by the fairer sex and that maternal instinct of knowing when something is not quite right undoubtedly helps. Pat says women have a motherly approach to looking after stock, taking more time to nurse and nurture and, have the experience to know when something is wrong.

390 cows are currently being milked, yielding 9,500 litres and averaging 4.21% butterfat and 3.42% milk protein. The most recent change to management was the introduction of sexed semen in late 2017 to ensure an increased number of heifers.

“We should start seeing the bulk of our heifer calves shortly” says Pat. “Although not guaranteed, this should keep our herd numbers to target and allow us to sell calved heifers and give another income stream.”

“In my mind, calves are the most important part of your dairy operation. If you don't have them - you don't have a future. So, it pays to look after them right from conception to calving and beyond. A healthy calf is a wealthy calf!” This care and attention is obviously paying off with Carskerdo recently having won the Scottish Holstein Club's Scottish Herds competition for 2018.

Latest calf weights reported:

	Weight gain 0-4 weeks
Target weight gain	0.5kg/day
Harbro top 25 average	0.64kg/day
Carskerdo	0.71kg/day

Harbro has recently strengthened its dairy team with some key appointments bolstering our on farm expertise.



Greg Leishman

Greg Leishman takes on the role of Dairy Project Manager. Greg will be based in SW Scotland

but will also cover units as far north as Aberdeenshire.

Career history: Greg graduated with a 2:1 honours degree in Agriculture and Nutrition from Aberdeen University in 2004. He initially worked as a dairyman on a farm in Stirlingshire for 2 years before taking on senior nutritionist and sales manager roles within other agricultural businesses.

“My role within Harbro is Dairy Project Manager. This will entail co-ordinating and developing current projects with a specific emphasis on Rumitech, working with farmers and processors in helping to **reduce methane** and **increase efficiency** on farms. I'll also be heavily involved on farm, providing nutritional advice and support with my own sales ledger concentrated in the SW but also stretching up to the north.”



Mhairi Strang

Mhairi joined us as Calf Specialist in the summer of 2018 responding to a growing requirement

amongst our dairy customers to offer dedicated support focussed on the calf. Mhairi graduated from the University of Glasgow in 2017 with a degree in Business and Management and subsequently worked at home on her family's dairy farm milking 290 cows before joining Harbro.

“While working at home I developed an interest in the calves in particular as I see them as being the future of the farm. This is why I jumped at the opportunity to take on the role of Calf Specialist at Harbro because I think that farmers are now realising the importance of concentrating on **efficiently rearing a heifer that can withstand the fast paced dairy industry.**”



David McCarragher

David McCarragher, Dairy Specialist returns to his home in Northern Ireland and will continue to provide on farm nutritional support to dairy farms, working also to build up the Harbro brand in what is largely a new region for the business. David will be working with farmers directly as well as in partnership with a small number of key distributors.

LOOK AFTER THE PLANET AND YOUR BANK BALANCE WITH RUMITECH



We recently received assurance from the Carbon Trust that our additive Rumitech reduces enteric methane emissions by 17.7% per litre of milk or 6% per day.

Although we've already conducted a wealth of research that demonstrates this saving, our R&D team are currently in the process of carrying out a new series of trials with dairy farms from Ayrshire, the north east of Scotland and the beautiful Isle of Mull (pictured here)

to analyse the secondary benefits that the product can bring.

We'll be following a cheese producer, a yoghurt producer and a farmer whose milk goes into KitKats to find out the results they have recorded since using Rumitech in the ration.

Keep an eye out to see how they're getting on!

INTERNATIONAL FOCUS: DENMARK UPDATE

Harbro has been working with distributor All About Cows in Denmark for the last 5 years. Owner Mads Holm Danielsen is a dairy consultant who adds value to dairy businesses through offering an exclusive range of minerals and supplements designed to increase performance.

Danish Dairy facts:

No of dairy farms	2800
Total number of cows	510,000
Average herd size	188
BREED COMPOSITION:	
Holstein	70%
Jersey	13%
Crossbreeds	10
Scandinavian Red	6%



Mads Holm Danielsen

We met with Tage Michael Kjaergaard, one of Mads's customers.

Tage owns Jakobsminde in Jutland. He is the fifth generation farmer on the current site where he milks 150 cows in 2 x 10 herringbone parlours. The farm comprises of 185 hectares, 48 hectares of grass is grown for silage, 46 hectares is wheat with the rest a mix of oilseed rape, rye, maize and white clover.

Tage grows 89% of the feed required on farm with a ration comprising of the following:

FEED	Kg.
Rapemeal	1.58
Concentrate	1.12
Maxammon wheat*	8.56
Grass silage 30% dm.	30.89
Maize silage 32% dm.	21.13
Dairy minerals	0.130
Limestone flour	0.150
Salt	0.050

*previously feeding 5.6kg Caustic Wheat

He has seen the following results since feeding the ration:

Performance increase	1,000 litres/cow
Improved in milk solids	149,600 krone (£17,667)
Reduced feed costs to	64,515 krone (£7,619)
Total financial benefit	554,115 krone = £65,440

Following a move from Caustic Wheat to Maxammon, Tage told us about his experience of using Maxammon, "I've been delighted with the results we've seen since feeding Maxammon. Not only am I seeing a significant increase in yield but the health benefits are making a big difference to the well being and performance of the herd. It is easy to use and fits in smoothly with our existing system.

Maxammon has enabled us to eliminate milk fever altogether which was causing us real problems. Looking forward we plan to continue using Maxammon and are about to introduce a new additive to our silage which will enable us to increase performance even more.



Jakobsminde

Danish agriculture is among the most efficient and knowledge based agricultural sectors in the world with its success put down to education and co-operation between farmers, as well as good quality soil. In 2013 61% of Denmark's total area was recorded as cultivated with grain firmly seen as Denmark's main crop.

The drive for efficiency as well as good soil and high degrees of self sufficiency provided Harbro with an opportunity to introduce its Maxammon grain treatment which allows farmers to maximise home grown cereals and at the same time increase performance.

Contact us to find out more about Milk Monitor, Rumen Rate, Maxammon and Rumitech

01888 545200.

