



The Rumen Friendly Approach

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As we move into the winter months and winter contract prices, it seems there are too many variables outside of our control - milk price, feed costs and the weather!

Although feed costs have risen slightly, interestingly, in comparison to this time last year they have actually only increased by 0.3ppl, which on the back of the current milk price means that the margin per cow is actually 35p/head/day higher than this time last year. Milk Monitor figures from October 2018 show us that variables relating to production - yield, butterfat and protein, as well as variables relating to health - rumen rate and efficiency are consistent with the average from October 2017. In comparison to figures from last month though, kilos of protein produced and rumen rate have dropped slightly which could be an indication that cows are struggling to extract sufficient energy from their new winter rations. This highlights the importance of routinely analysing silage stocks, especially for those farms who are running high forage rations, to ensure that we are still meeting the cows' requirements whilst trying to keep feed costs to a minimum.

It also highlights the importance of monitoring performance to ensure we have the best possible understanding of how our cows are really performing so that we can then tailor nutrition accordingly. Milk Monitor, our monthly recording and benchmarking scheme measures the performance relating to multiple variables on farm enabling us to advise on the best possible solution to meet the evolving needs of the dairy herd. It enables a farmer to see how performance fluctuates month by month and is also a useful benchmarking tool to see how this compares against the average.

In some parts of the country, low silage stocks will provide a challenge this year so we're working with our customers to develop individual herd rations designed to make the most of the feed materials available and at the same time maximise rumen rate and milk yield. Recent information gathered by Milk Monitor has shown that feeding more forage doesn't automatically mean more profit. Since milk yield is driven by energy, a ration high in balanced concentrates such as Maxammon can provide a more balanced energy supply than traditional home grown forages. In addition, the inclusion of Rumitech within the ration has been shown to improve feed efficiency, enabling farms to extend silage stocks that may be in short supply whilst driving more milk production and increasing farm profitability.

	Oct 17 figures	Oct 18 figures
DMI (kg DM/cow/day)	21.5	21.9
Milk yield	27.2	26.6
Rumen rate	1.31	1.25
Butterfat %	4.11	3.99
Protein %	3.33	3.39
Margin/cow/day	£4.52	£4.87

Comparing Milk Monitor figures from Oct 2017 to Oct 2018 shows slight fluctuations in the variables, but overall, cow margin/day has increased, which could be attributed to the improved autumn this year, with some herds able to graze better grass swards for longer.

Find out how you can understand and improve your performance on farm using Harbro Milk Monitor.

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