



R.M. JONES Newsletter

FARMCENTRES

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July 2023

Supporting Ewes on the approach to Topping

Last summer the high temperatures and drought affected grass and forage availability throughout the grazing season and so affected ewe **body condition score (BCS)** and potential topping performance. As a result, industry reports would suggest that **lambling percentages were down by up to 30% this year.**

As we start to think about this year's topping, lambs are traditionally weaned around 8 to 10 weeks pre-topping to allow ewes to recover and gain **BCS** if required. It is estimated that ewes require at least **6-8 weeks of good quality grazing (>10.5 ME MJ/kg DM)** to gain **1 BCS**, with **1 BCS** being the equivalent to **13% of bodyweight**. If ewes are required to increase the condition score by more than one, or grazing is limited, or poor quality perhaps as a result of high summer temperatures and drought then further time may be required, in addition early weaning and supplementation should be considered.

This year in particular, grass quality has already largely been below average. **Metabolisable energy and protein levels are generally below the previous 3-year average, having never fully recovered from last year's drought.** This will be impacting growth and milk yields across all classes of livestock. Furthermore, **grass sugar levels have also been significantly below average since last year,** being nearly **50% lower in April and May**. This will be limiting protein supply to the animal, as the rumen microbes require sufficient fermentable energy in the form of starch and sugar to fully utilise the protein available in grass. Supplementation with feed buckets such as **Opti-Lix High Energy** is therefore an ideal way to supply the extra fermentable energy required to optimise production from pasture this summer.

Supplementation can help balance energy, protein and minerals during this key time in the sheep calendar. Energy in the diet at this time will not only support body condition but is also important to ensure that ewe's cycle and subsequently hold to service at topping. Minerals and trace elements such as cobalt and selenium are also important during this time with deficiencies resulting in lower ovulation rates, poorer ovum quality and reduced fertility. **Opti-Lix High Energy** is an extra high energy, feed and mineral bucket suitable for feeding ewes on lower quality grazing as seen later in the grazing season. The high sugar content plus **balanced protein (including natural and urea protein)** and energy help complement grazing and forage, supporting feed digestion and animal performance. The inclusions of **minerals, vitamins** and **trace elements** including **cobalt, selenium, iodine** and **zinc** also support ewe health and performance.

Arable Update – July 2023

Comments

Autumn sown crops, on the whole hold decent promise for harvest. Disease has been kept under control in most crops but a lot of leaf tipping in wheat has been seen across all varieties. Hopefully this won't impact on yield.

Spring crops are, on the whole, far less exciting. Generally late drilled they have struggled in the heat and are thin and short. Where they have had some moisture they will give a yield, it will still be important however to keep an eye on disease, in particular Ramularia in Spring Barley crops.

Tasks

OSR Keep an eye on Mealy Cabbage Aphid over the next few weeks. Though not normally an issue they can suddenly multiply from seemingly nothing and a big population can impact on yield.

Crop desiccation will start this month. There is a minimum 2 week harvest window between application and harvest. **Iskay** is the pod sealant of choice.

Beet Micronutrient top ups (especially Boron and Magnesium) along with fungicide applications will be required this month. A large number of late drilled beet crops have been slow to emerge. There may be a requirement to top up herbicide on these crops. Where herbicide has been delayed to accommodate slow emergence the use of **Safari Duo** can help control slightly bigger weeds.

Maize Maize is racing through the growth stages. If you want to apply late liquid N to increase cob size it would be sensible to get some on farm and ready. Some maize may be 1 meter tall in ten days time!

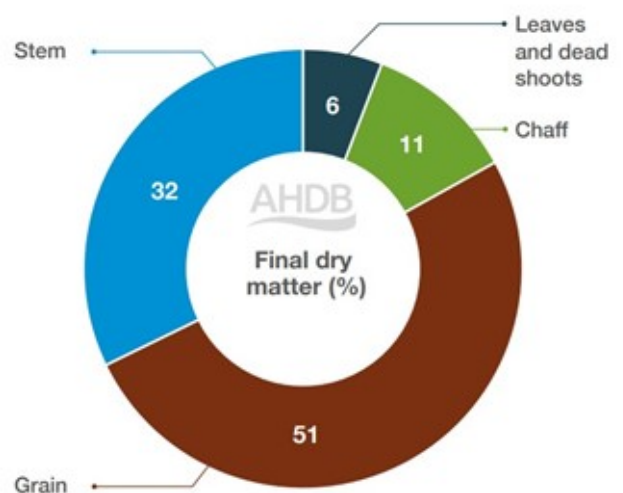
UK LIFFE Wheat Nov23	£195 - £205/t
MATIF OSR Nov23	£395 - £410/t
AN34.5% Fertiliser	£350 +/-

Current wheat GS	71+
Current OSR GS	75+

Technical Corner – Crop Data

Cereal crops, by this stage of growth (GS70+) are:

- Well and truly into the “production” phase of growth.
- Green Area Index (GAI) will be declining from its late May peak with the lowest leaves senescing first until the stems eventually die off in late July/early Aug.
- Total biomass peaks around early/mid July at approx. 20tDM/ha and then declines slightly by harvest. Biomass can increase by 0.18tDM/ha/day during this stage
- The only part of the plant gaining mass at this point is the grain. Cell sap and soluble plant reserves gradually move to the grain as the stems lignify. Along with this nitrogen moves to the grain and is converted to protein. This period of grain fill can be extended by moisture and nitrogen.
- The AHDB chart below shows the breakdown and final proportions of crop biomass at or around harvest.



Autumn Seed

Many of you may have come to Gatley in June and see the crop variety trials. Please talk to us for your seed requirements or seed cleaning service. We can help with varieties, crop budgets and crop planning as well as provide seed.

Soil Sampling—Don't forget to get soil samples completed for land destined for autumn cropping.