



The Year Ahead by Bill Harper

As we look back on the finest February and March that I can remember, it is interesting to reflect on where we are now. The dairy herds we work with have had an excellent winter in terms of milk production, with good forages being complemented by accurate rationing of quality mixes and Harpers dairy nuts. The herds showing the best figures all have real control over the amounts fed to each cow and I think we have ended up with excellent feed rates and less fat cows. Hopefully we will now see milk prices rise steadily and feed ingredient prices drop after harvest. I believe we have done well to limit the extent of price rises this winter to £30 per tonne when the average price of ingredients has risen by more than £50 per tonne. We have passed on to our customers most of the savings we made by buying early. The next few months until harvest will be interesting, but as well bought winter ingredient contracts are now coming to an end, prices will move up a little more.



Our commitment to you is threefold:

- 1) We will not use inferior ingredients to improve our margin.
- 2) We will always remain focused on helping you to achieve profit from your herd.
- 3) We will take one small margin from our feeds and keep our costs as low as possible.

This reminds me of a wise old farmer who came to our first open evening at Stibb Cross nineteen years ago. He said to me "Boy, if I was you, I would try to make a little bit of money a lot of times." Little did I think at that time that we would reach a point where we are selling 150,000 tonnes of feed, but by making it in such high quantities we have the lowest production cost possible. All the value is in the feed and the old farmer was very right.



Growing and Finishing Cattle by Bill Harper

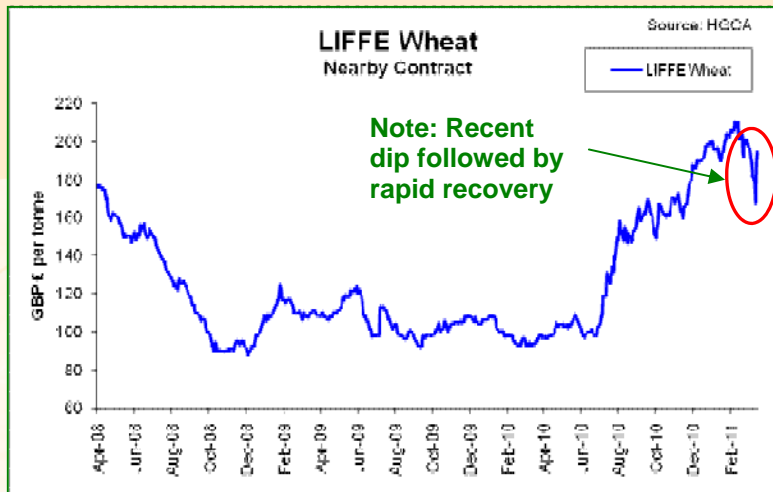
With the beef price continuing to edge upwards, we are going to have to make some good decisions on which cattle to graze and which to finish. Cattle that are within sixty days of being ready for slaughter should be kept in and finished. Cattle could be in quite short supply in May and the price should reflect this. The next group of cattle that could finish in June and July from grass and 2-3kg of cake could pay just as well, but it is important to keep them going to get the necessary level of finish.

Sheep by Bill Harper

With a super lambing period behind us, it is now time to decide which groups of lambs are going to be aimed at the early lamb market. The key point is usually at the end of May, by which time lambs need to be ready. To achieve this get the creep feeders out as soon as possible and give those January/February lambs ad lib Lamb Starter Pellets. Don't forget to give them 2-3 weeks on Deccox to clear out the coccidiosis.

Grain and Straights Trading by Andrew Davies

It has been a roller-coaster ride for the last couple of months to say the least. The good news is that raw materials have eased from their extreme highs. The major volatility has been seen in the cereal markets, with one week in mid-March showing a price variance in wheat of approximately £30, both up and down. The volatility has been caused by recent developments in the world, notably the Far East and Japan. Speculators or fund managers withdrew their money from commodities and placed it into oil, as they felt that this was the product which could be the next to inflate in price. Consequently raw materials fell in price until the reality "kicked in" and the fund managers realised that the fundamentals were still the same - so back up they went.



Reports suggest that cereals will be in short supply until harvest, but there should be enough supply to see us through. A Defra report released on 13th March showed that, as of 1st December 2010, UK farmers had increased winter wheat plantings by 0.2%. Winter barley plantings were down 7.5%, winter oats plantings were down 17% and winter oilseed rape plantings have increased by 11.5%. The feeling is however that, due to the current prices, a great deal of spring cereals will be planted.

At the time of writing wheat is trading at approximately £190 per tonne and barley is at a £12/£13 per tonne discount. For November 2011 wheat is trading at approximately £150 per tonne, with barley discounted at £10 per tonne.

On the protein side both soya and rape have eased. South American harvests are currently underway, with the Brazilian harvest almost 50% complete. The USA have increased production for Brazil by 2.5 million tonnes to 70 million, but reduced Argentina by one million tonnes to 49.5 million. The big question mark and the factor that will influence the soya market more than anything else is "What will North America plant?" Rape prices have eased due to lack of demand and the reduction in soya prices.

Unfortunately fibre prices remain firm for the summer. Sugar beet is expensive at a £40 per tonne premium over soya hulls, which makes it uneconomic. Citrus pulp, as always, is in short supply and will therefore be expensive during the early part of the summer until the new crop arrives in early September.



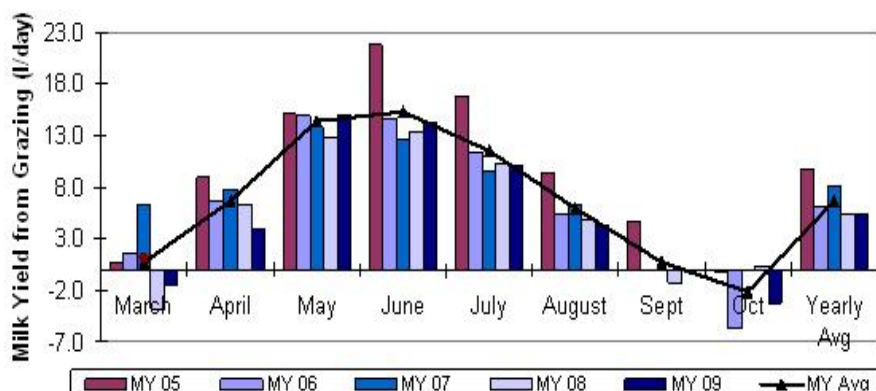
Protected fats (Calcium Soaps) look set to ease, due to the easing of vegetable oils and the lack of demand from Far Eastern countries.

Since the early part of the year the pound sterling has strengthened against the US dollar. This has also helped with buying dollar-based commodities.

If you would like to discuss any of the points raised above or any matters relating to straights, please do not hesitate to contact Sharon Frankham, Linda Atchley or myself.

Glen's Dairy Diary by Glen Johns

Average Milk Yield from Grazing

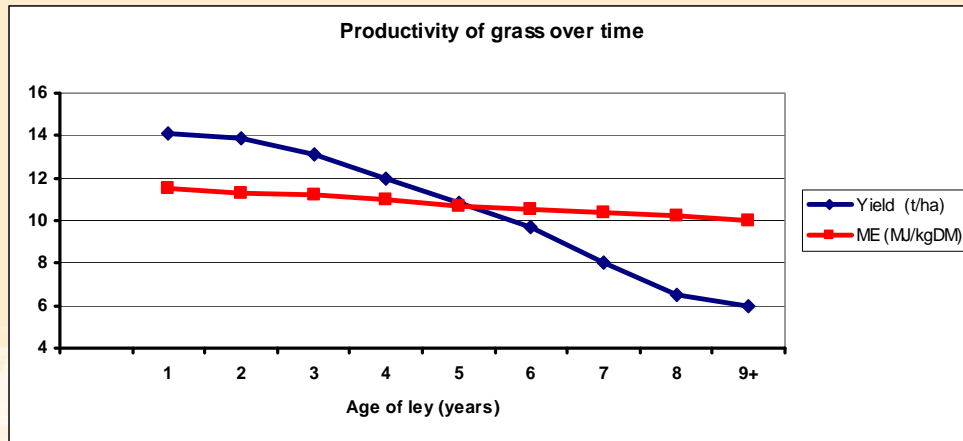


What is Grass Worth?

We have been testing grass over the summer period for five years now and we are starting to see a pattern showing the value of grass each month. As I write my article, it has been a fabulous time for lambing and catching up with field work but, as antithesis to the old saying goes, "If March comes in like a lamb it will go out like a lion". Not that I'm being pessimistic, but I'm sure this will prove true and we are in for a blackthorn winter.

As you can see from the graph beside, over the last five years M + 15 litres is the most we have achieved in May, dropping off to M - 5 litres in October.

It is very important that the first grazing is very tight to encourage early tillering of your grasses so that we get a dense sward all summer. Any old leys need to be sprayed to kill off chickweed and overseeded or ploughed to establish a new ley. The graph below shows how a grass ley deteriorates over time.



At Harpers we have been selling the Monarch range for some time and it is pleasing to walk around farms that now have over half their acreage consisting of these leys. These mixtures are like me - simple but effective! Multigraze and Multicut contain intermediate and late perennial grasses, but no earlyies. Therefore the average heading dates of late May maintain a thick leafy sward all summer with no "racers". Multigraze, Multicut and our economy mixture, Greensward, are kept in stock at all times.

Magnesium Supplementation

Magnesium levels in dairy cake will increase to 0.6% from 1st April and go to 0.75% (2oz in 8lb) when the time is right. If you are an early grazer or on the coast, please specify what level of magnesium you require when you place your order. TMR Diets need to supplement with either one of the products below:-

Calcined Magnesite (Cal Mag) = 50g / cow / day
Magnesium Chloride Flakes = 150g / cow / day

Rumenco Supalix

I am pleased to announce that we have been given a franchise to stock Rumenco Supalix buckets. When I have sold these in the past we have always had good intakes because they are very palatable.

Supalix Mag Booster (10% CP / 10% Mag)

This is a Magnesium Feed Bucket which gives good intakes. It is dual purpose, for both cattle and sheep. Please remember that these buckets weigh 22.5kg, which is reflected in the price. It is also available in 100kg tubs. Garlic buckets will be available from late May.

To start the season we will stock the following buckets:

Supalix Cattle	(cattle mineral bucket)
Super Energy Plus Fish Oil	(for cattle and sheep)
Supalix Mag Booster	(for suckler cows and sheep)
Lifeline Pre-Calver	(for dairy cattle and suckler cows)

There is a discount if you take forty-five buckets (1 tonne) directly delivered onto farm.



Maize Seed

Surprisingly our sales of maize seed packs to date are up on last year, so well done to the Sales team! But remember it's not all about the variety of seed. As Reed Partridge, one of our cattle specialists, says and I quote:

"The Five Ps - Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance"

1. The correct field and location
2. Sub-soil - break up 'pans'
3. Soil test for pH, P and K
4. Correct nutrients
5. Choose a good variety from Harpers.

Harpers would like to thank everyone who completed our questionnaire. The responses were extremely useful and the Company will be working on the points raised to improve all areas of service to our customers.

FERTILISER

After-cut prices are now out for Yara, Bunn and Origin!

Please call Sharon Frankham for details.



Pete's Corner by Pete Davis

This month I'd like to talk about risk management in your business. Specifically looking at diets that will allow you to optimise performance from forages, whilst providing the best value for money. When you have high fixed costs and relatively low prices for your supply it really focuses the mind, but can have a tendency to lead to cost cutting at the detriment of profit and sustainability. Your business needs you to be open minded but firm in setting its targets. Crucially you need sound and balanced advice.

Let's cut to the chase - feeding this summer is going to look expensive on a per tonne basis. However if you farm and buy wisely then there will still be plenty of opportunity to grow your profit throughout the summer and into the winter. With this in mind we have spent a considerable amount of time this spring looking at our range of dairy cakes and reformulating them in a manner that will allow you to optimise output from your home grown crops, grazing and clamped forages.



As always all of our diets will remain fixed formulation. Cows need consistency and we have proved time and again that this approach works. We are still making our nuts from a course grist so that they degrade in the animal much more slowly. This is important when grazing tends to break down exceptionally quickly in the gut, encouraging acidosis. There is also a large amount of winter forage that will be used for buffering that is carrying a high acid loading. Anything below 3.7pH is extremely acidic. We will continue to use very high quality ingredients, meaning that you will not find cheap fillers in any of our diets. Finally we will continue to trial and challenge the performance of our products, in order to make you more profitable.

I am proud to announce our new range of dairy cakes "**The Pro-Fit Dairy Range**" which is **Professionally** tailored to **Fit** the capabilities of your animals and the goals of your business.

This range of cakes is now very broad, allowing us to feed anything from extensive systems to intensive systems and all shades in between. It will appeal both to the price-conscious and to the farmer demanding high performance, but not at any cost.

Crucially, the energy values and total nutritional quality of the upper cakes within this range will allow us to challenge feed rates. Lower feed rates mean that less room is taken up in the gut, allowing a far higher level of forage consumption. This is only possible if the ingredients are of a high quality. Poor quality ingredients such as sunflower, rice bran, cocoa shells, oatfeed etc will not sustain the cow and will ultimately lead to poor health, poor fertility and short lifespan.

Our aim is to enhance your cows' performance and take more of you over that 3,000 litres from forage mark to knock on the door of 4,000 litres plus.

Basically, the opportunity is there to make more money and encourage cow longevity. Please speak to one of our specialists to find out more about how we can help you to move your business forward over the coming months and years.

Lastly I have news of a skydive for charity that six of us from Harpers are going to do in May. If any of you have ever thought that you would like to throw me out of the door of an aeroplane at 15,000 feet (and I'm sure there are many of you!) here is your opportunity to make this happen by sponsoring us for Cancer Research. Unfortunately for you the amount you donate does not affect whether they give me a parachute or not! Should you wish to contribute we would be exceptionally grateful. Please speak to either Sharon Frankham or myself to do this or alternatively donate online at www.justgiving.com/Harpersteam1. Thank you.



Opening times for collection and for placing orders: Monday to Friday 8.00am to 5.00pm

For next day delivery, please place your order by 12 noon

To ensure that we have in stock the items you require, if possible please call to place your order before coming to the mill to collect feed.

For any further information please call: **01409 254300** or one of our Specialists on:

Bill Harper	07831 099182	Chris Ware	07815 830352	Paul Cholwill	07966 021755
Glen Johns	07831 725779	Steve Jones	07976 562667	Reed Partridge	07770 333389
Pete Davis	07817 161681	Malcolm Prout	07779 982926	Andrew Crisp	07413 012660

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