

### Spring Grassland Management

**Peter Slark takes a look at Spring Grassland Management with a view to improving results.**

Grazed grass costs an average of 2.00 pence per litre compared to 4.00 p/l for conserved forages. Replacing higher cost silages with lower cost grazed grass will help increase profits, providing output is not reduced.

Achieving adequate intakes at grazing requires a high level of management- it is not just a case of opening the gate!

Overcoming these challenges include:

- Setting up a controlled grazing system that can be managed
- Monitoring grass growth, intakes and production
- Offering balanced supplementary feed as necessary and targeting this to cows that need it
- Being flexible with grazing and silage fields- pre-graze silage fields and silage grazing fields to manage grass heights
- For an 'early bite' a few hours is all that's needed- allocate just enough area for them to eat and bring them back indoors to lie down and ruminate before they cause damage
- The historical rule of 'don't go out until they can stay out' doesn't apply – a flexible approach is best where cows graze in appropriate conditions and are kept inside in bad weather

This leads me onto the pro's and con's of grassland operations, a lot of which are done traditionally without perhaps thinking of field's individually:

#### **Harrowing**

Benefits: promotes stronger and denser grass growth by ripping out dead material and breaking up slurry/FYM.

Drawbacks: risk of compaction.

#### **Flat Rolling**

Benefits: levels off uneven ground and pushes down stones. Important on silage ground, but is the benefit worth the cost on grazed ground?

Drawbacks: risk of compaction damaging tiller growing points and reducing yield. Often wastes time and fuel!

## **Aeration**

Benefits: stimulates root growth and prunes lateral roots and helps to get air into the soil to warm it up allowing earlier growth. Encourages absorption of nutrients by improving surface drainage.

Drawbacks: yield benefits not seen over the whole season.

## **Peter Slark**

For more detail and specific recommendations specific to your individual requirement, just contact P&L and we'll be happy to help with practical advice. Call us today on 01948 880261