



## EXTRAORDINARY TIMES

We are currently living with the extraordinary threat to life from Coronavirus which is changing day to day life for populations worldwide. Farming businesses are not spared the threat, nonetheless must carry on producing, alongside the added concerns of how markets will be affected by the turmoil. The widespread supermarket queues recently experienced, putting strain on the whole food supply chain, highlight the importance of food to all of us and how vital the production and supply of food on to the table actually is.

It remains to be seen how the crisis affects the timing of the already huge challenge of agreeing a permanent trade deal with the EU before the end of the year. For UK agriculture it's critical that we achieve the best possible level of unrestricted access to the markets of our nearest neighbours and can also source willing labour – an issue that will undoubtedly need to be addressed over the coming weeks.

Potentially initiating the course for the biggest change in farming for a generation, the Agricultural Bill saw its second reading in the House of Commons in February. The bill introduces the move from direct payments to the support of activities and interventions that deliver for our environment and enhance animal welfare through Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS). Within this 'public money for public goods' philosophy, it's essential that the value of UK food, produced to some of the highest standards in the world is appreciated. New measures in the bill include soil protection as a stated aim, with financial assistance to farmers for protecting or improving its quality, a five-year review on food security and that budgets must also "have regard to the need to encourage the production of food". Once we are through this Coronavirus crisis it is essential that policy makers place a much greater emphasis on the importance of food security, with specific legislation to ensure UK food standards are not compromised by lower quality imports.

As we move into this new era, with a government commitment to help boost farmers' productivity through investment in innovation and technology, rewarding farmers for clean air, water and soil management, this is not the time to reduce support. Unfortunately, with Basic Payments starting to be phased out from next year and ELMS not fully available until 2024, it's virtually impossible for farmers to properly plan for the future. As a livestock industry, we must unite to strengthen our voice, to clarify how UK farming, particularly grass-based milk and meat production can be part of the climate change solution as well as feeding Britain.

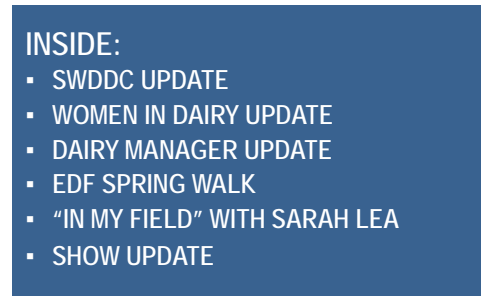
At Kingshay we are doing our part, primarily with our **Soil Carbon Project**, which, in the first instance has successfully seen over 100 fields across the country sampled and analysed for soil organic carbon (SOC). In an aim to help build the picture to better understand the current levels of SOC under grassland across the UK. The findings of this research will be published in a report in the autumn. We have also been distributing a series of **DAIRY insight** publications for our members on '**Net Zero Emissions**'. Where we attempt to identify the sources of each GHG, how it may be reduced and aim to outline current and future actions that can help the UK dairy industry become net zero by 2040.

In a post-Brexit world, the future is uncertain, but what is clear, is that there is change ahead – so let's embrace it and make the future a positive one!

## CONTINUED SERVICE AND SUPPORT

Through this challenging period, the Kingshay team are carrying out the majority of our work from home. We would like to reassure all of our clients that we are committed to continuing to provide our customary professional service to all. Please continue to contact us via email: [contact.us@kingshay.co.uk](mailto:contact.us@kingshay.co.uk) or via the telephone on 01458 851555 leaving a message if necessary.

At Kingshay we hope you, your families, friends and staff stay safe. It has never been more important for people to look after each other.



# SOUTH WEST DAIRY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE UPDATE



In the last Kingshay Newsletter we said we were looking forward to an early turnout! Little did we know of the biblical quantities of rain that were to fall in the next three months. At the time of writing, the soils on our grazing platform are at full water capacity, like everywhere else, and will need a good two weeks of dry weather before we can get the cows out and then only on the driest fields. That gives us a bit more time to make some improvements to our cow tracks, if only we could get machinery out there! We have sleepers lined up to install on the sloping tracks leading to the grazing gates. Currently these tracks are crushed stone with astroturf on top, which are great in the dry but get slippery on the steeper inclines in wet conditions. Meanwhile grass covers are beginning to accelerate. Growth has hardly stopped all winter because it's been so mild. Kingshay associate consultant and grazing expert John Bennett has been in to help us second guess what the season is going to do next and adjust our grazing plans.

We have had loads of visitors over the winter from all corners of the UK and abroad, but due to COVID-19, sadly and understandably there will be no visitors to the farm until further notice. Now is the time for farmers to show that food production carries on come rain, shine or virus.

In the last few weeks much work has been done by the Kingshay and Agri-EPI Centre teams submitting some exciting research projects under Innovate UK's Transforming Food Production scheme for the new round of funding called Science and Technology into Practice which is very much what the South West Dairy Development Centre was built to facilitate. Successful project bids will start in the summer. Many focus on using technology to improve productivity and reduce carbon impact – vital if we are to achieve net zero carbon by 2050.



## GIVE YOUR COWS WHAT THEY LIKE TO EAT

Our Spring Grass Seed Mixtures are now available.

Kingshay supply a wide range of seed mixtures to suit your business.

Choose from:

- Preferred Grazing Mixtures
- Silaging Mixes
- Short-term, IRG, Hybrid & Red Clover
- Organic Seeds

"It's robust, long-lasting & the cows love it. We have tried other seed at similar prices but they just don't compare!"

Robert & Lucy Noad  
- Trowbridge

PLUS.. a further discount of 5% applied to large orders over 25 acres

Kingshay Members get discounted rates!  
Please contact the team on 01458 851555 to discuss your grass seed needs!

"Since switching to Kingshay Grass Seed, every paddock is a preferred paddock and the cows' heads go straight down to graze!"

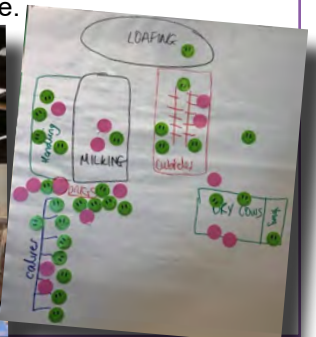
David Helliar  
- Wiltshire



*"Solutions are not found by finger-pointing, they are reached by discussion"*

...something known only too well by the farmers that attend the discussion groups facilitated by Kingshay.

The Somerset Women in Dairy Discussion Group met recently to look at the topic of "Reducing Antibiotic Usage on Farm". Whilst strides in antibiotic reduction have been huge across the industry, fine tuning can still be made. Some of the group had benchmarked their antibiotic usage using the Kingshay Antimicrobial Monitoring Service, including the host, whose herd ranked at position 5 out of a group of more than 250 producers monitored by Kingshay. With technical input provided by Ailsa Milnes, Veterinary Advisor, Boehringer Ingelheim Ltd (sponsors of the Women in Dairy initiative), the attendees walked around the host unit. Strategic stops were made at crucial areas to share best practice, what works on their farms, and what doesn't. Discussions, as ever with this group, were effortless and good ideas shared – these were highlighted in the round-up mapping session (see photo below). The green smiley faces were placed by the attendees where they thought areas of the host farm working well and pink dots showing where attendees had seen or heard something they were going to change or do differently on their own unit when they got home.



## RECENT MAILINGS

Twice a month, Kingshay's farmer, consultant and vet members receive Insight publications and a Monthly Checklist and have access to previous ones in the members' area of the website at [www.kingshay.com](http://www.kingshay.com). Here are some highlights from those produced in recent months:

## MARCH CHECKLIST

- Grazing Plans Disrupted by Wet Weather
- Key Date for RPA
- Environmental Land Management Scheme
- Pneumonia Weather

## DAIRY MANAGER UPDATE

What challenges will this year's grazing season bring? As many herds are turning out the cows to grass, we look back at trends over the last 10 years - last year was a relatively normal year by comparison!

As shown in the table, 2019 saw milk solids reach a new high at 625 kg per cow, with milk solids from forage at 203kg/cow.

Key years to note are - 2012 with the summer floods and 2018 with the extremely dry summer. Both are at either end of the weather spectrum but both impacting on production levels.

ANNUAL ROLLING RESULTS		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Holstein/Friesian, Conventional Year Ending December											
Cows in herd		166	168	174	183	189	196	202	207	209	201
<b>MILK PRODUCTION</b>											
Yield per cow	litres	7,882	8,011	7,809	7,830	8,103	8,127	8,024	8,221	8,264	8,393
Yield from all forage per cow	litres	2,415	2,683	2,279	2,161	2,237	2,490	2,528	2,520	2,391	2,703
% of total yield from forage		31%	33%	29%	28%	28%	31%	32%	31%	29%	32%
Yield from grazed forage per cow	litres	786	1,033	969	923	982	1,107	983	1,084	735	906
Milk solids per cow	kg	576	584	572	571	588	595	590	603	609	625
Milk solids from forage per cow	kg	178	197	168	159	164	184	187	186	178	203
Milk solids from grazing per cow	kg	88	100	86	88	83	98	90	101	73	92

For 2018, this impacted on July and August milk production levels and health incidences, particularly Mastitis and Lameness cases. As a result, Milk from grazing dropped to the lowest it has been over the last 10 years to 735 litres per cow from grazed grass.

Are we set for another dry season? It seems very "unlikely" given that we have just been through a third hurricane and the fields are

saturated (some still flooded) but anything is possible these days. Further monthly & rolling trends are available at [www.kingshay.com/dairy-costings/latest-results/](http://www.kingshay.com/dairy-costings/latest-results/)

Dairy Manager users have the option to monitor Milk from Grazing levels. All you need to do is supply a date the cows were first turned out and fully housed in the Autumn, plus include any Conserved Forages fed during the year. Email the Dairy Manager team at [Dairy.Manager@Kingshay.co.uk](mailto:Dairy.Manager@Kingshay.co.uk) to discuss this further.



## DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY - THERE IS MORE THAN ONE WAY TO CRACK AN EGG!

EDF-UK the local branch of European Dairy Farmers congregated for their spring meeting at the beginning of March. The visits included three very diverse farms from a 75-cow robot unit, to a 320-cow organic herd and a new 1,400-cow spring calving unit – fitting very neatly into the meeting title "Doing things differently – there is more than one way to crack an egg!"

The first visit was to Sansaw Estate, courtesy of James Thompson and family. Here the 1,400-cow dairy herd was established in 2013, with investment in a 70-point Waikato rotary parlour and a grazing platform with 14 km of tracks, including several underpasses to cross local lanes. The predominantly NZ Friesian-Jersey herd is managed on a simple spring block calving system producing 450kg milk solids per cow per year. This season has seen considerable investment in cubicle housing for 900 cows and loose yards for a further 300, along with slurry storage. With the wet winter we have just experienced this could not have been better timed!

The Sadler family have been farming at Bridge Farm since 1950, now managed by Neale and wife Claire, farming in partnership with Neale's parents hosted the second visit. After a short break from dairying, Neale invested in an A3 Lely milking robot in 2006, establishing a herd of 75 cows. The herd calve all year round, averaging around 10,000 litres per cow and have access to grazing during the season. The herd has been specifically bred to produce A2 milk, hailed as a breakthrough for consumers who suffer an allergic reaction to ordinary milk. Neale is passionate about the benefits of A2 and has recently established an on-farm processing dairy to exploit local opportunities. Discussion was had around the possibilities of herd expansion, and investment in a 2nd robot.

Steve Walley and family at Fernyleas Farm kindly hosted the group's third and final visit of the trip. Here the dairy herd has been expanded to 320 over the last 18 months following investment in a (much admired by the visitors) new 200-cow cubicle house, along with slurry storage. The herd were previously loose-housed, so now two-thirds are in cubicles. The cows calve all year round and produce around 7,500 litres per cow from under two tonnes of purchased feed, with further milk from forage a key focus. Investment in tracks on the grazing platform has accommodated the extra cows and the herd are grazed as one group for as long as possible, changing to two groups on the shoulders of the season to allow more targeted supplementation.

Progressive Farmers interested in joining EDF-UK group and learning more about the EDF Cost of Production process should in the first instance contact Richard Simpson at Kingshay (Tel: 01458 851555).



## MAXIMISING THE VALUE OF EVERY CALF

An increasing number of processors are introducing plans to encourage farmers to phase out calf euthanasia of healthy, young bull calves. The key is to plan ahead to maximise the value of every calf, this dairy insight publication explores the key considerations.

## THERMODURIC BACTERIA

A growing number of milk processors are testing milk for thermophilic bacteria and penalising for counts above >500 cfu/ml. This dairy insight looks at where thermophilic bacteria are found and how to prevent them getting into your milk.

Feedback on publications will be gratefully received, let Sarah know your thoughts on 01458 851555 or email [sarah.bolt@kingshay.co.uk](mailto:sarah.bolt@kingshay.co.uk)

## "IN MY FIELD" WITH SARAH LEA

Whether you are Spring, Autumn or AYR calving, we at P&L AgriConsulting see from our clients there is a clear correlation between profitability and yield from forage. But the important factors are understanding why and how our top 25% most profitable farms are achieving this, and how you could implement change to improve the profitability of your farm.

Key to the success of any farm business is initially understanding what the farms profit requirement is - work out what profit your business needs to deliver to meet your own requirements and pay back debt. You can then calculate where your cost of production needs to be to deliver these returns. Without understanding this, you may not be running the best system to meet all your cash commitments.

Regardless of the system, one key relationship to profit is total yield from forage. When increasing your yield from forage we see a marked improvement in forage efficiency, that is the % of the total milk achieved from forage.

Turnout is upon us for the farms who are grazing, so now is the time to be asking yourself "should I be achieving more from grazing?"

Grazing is one way that your yield from forage can be improved, but more importantly with grazed grass being your

cheapest feed, making the most of it will benefit your bottom line.

Your immediate success grazing will come down to two main points, your ability to manage grass and the initial planning of the infrastructure. This will include mapping your farm, designing the right size paddocks, fencing, water, and rotation length. If it isn't simple to manage on a day to day basis, you won't carry on.

If you are already grazing, could you do it better? Are you measuring your grass and entering with covers of 2,900kg DM/ha? The benefit of entering optimum covers rather than 3,200kg DM/ha could be worth an extra 180-litres/cow from grazed grass over a 5-month period. That's an extra 36,000-litres for a 200-cow herd at no extra cost! Or an equivalent of saving 18 tons of feed!



Plan now to get the most from your grazing this year.

Written by Sarah Lea, P&L Consulting (Kingshay Associate Consultants)

Do you want to independently analyse your costs of production?

Use Kingshay's Profit Manager service to monitor profitability by enterprise

& compare your herd's financial performance to other producers. Contact us for more details.

### Dairy Labour Survey; *the people challenge*



The UK dairy industry faces a number of long-term challenges, with the availability and retention of labour ranking highly for many individual farm businesses.

Keen to gather the facts surrounding labour on today's modern dairy farms Kingshay sent their labour survey far and wide, to members and non-members alike. The survey received some printed press coverage as well as online media attention. This led to a positive response in the number of completed surveys received back to us.

With the survey now closed, we are evaluating the data to compile the evidence. We will report back on the composition of the labour on farm and how the use of technology, equipment and contracted labour such as foot trimming, heat detection etc. impacts staffing levels. We hope to also identify some key areas of focus to find solutions to the current staffing challenges faced.

As soon as the report is available it will be sent out to Members and respondents of the survey. Finally, congratulations to **Mary & Bryan Thomas** from Carmarthen, who were selected at random from all entries, winning the £100 "Buy a Gift" voucher.

## WELCOME **Healthy Hooves**<sup>®</sup> OUR NEW CORPORATE MEMBER

Healthy Hooves<sup>®</sup> is a family run company based in Leicestershire and a chemical manufacturer and wholesaler with over 50 years of experience in the industry, with a range of products both industrial and agricultural.

The company was originally developed in the USA, to combat the overuse of heavy metals (copper sulphate) on dairy farms.

In 2007 Healthy Hooves<sup>®</sup> started to develop, manufacture & market this unique product to the UK, before expanding into Europe, Russia, the Middle East, China and India. They continue to expand their hoof care range with their Sheep and Beef product, hoof paste and Spot hoof sprays and their latest innovate footbath.

Barry Clements - Centre of excellence in dairy farming and business partner says - "We are proud to be working with Kingshay to promote our Healthy Hooves<sup>®</sup> range of products and pass the knowledge gained in assisting with the efficiency & profitability to the dairy farmer."

### DAIRY-TECH

Kingshay had a great day at Dairy Tech this year, with our stand having a clean, fresh look we attracted many. We were focussing on

our soil carbon project which gained the interest of farmers and media alike, with an interactive soil quiz we engaged with numerous people from across the industry. The show was well attended and there was a real buzz in the air, despite the many challenges on the horizon, British farmers prove they aren't afraid to take it on.



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