December 2013

Kingshay News

Providing practical support to professional producers

WHAT WILL YOU DO DIFFERENTLY IN 2014?

As another year draws to a close what can you learn from it to do better next year?

2013 will be remembered by many as a year of recovery from the lasting effects of 2012 and its unpredictable weather. A cold and snowy start in certain areas meant that the grazing season began slowly and average milk yields struggled to improve. It was not until August that milk yields started to increase on last year. Many margins were affected and although milk prices increased, feed costs were the highest they have been for a long time, resulting in the milk price to feed price ratio being the tightest for more than 10 years.

Evaluate performance

What will you do differently next year?

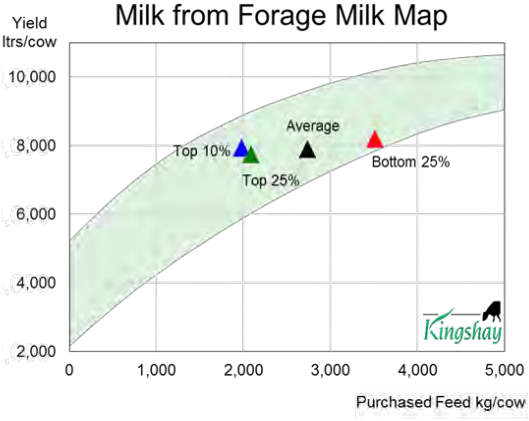
Year End Oct 2013	Top 10%	Top 25%	Average	Bottom 25%	Your Herd
Yield from all forage (litres per cow)	3,819	3,378	2,096	628	
% of total yield from forage	50%	45%	27%	8%	
MOPF per cow (£)	1,802	1,751	1,626	1,580	
Year End Oct 2012	**Top 10%**	**Top 25%**	**Average**	**Bottom 25%**	**Your Herd**
Yield from all forage (litres per cow)	4,066	3,640	2,373	989	
% of total yield from forage	51%	47%	30%	12%	
MOPF per cow (£)	1,763	1,694	1,588	1,525	

Ranked by Milk from Forage

* Analysis of Holstein/Friesian, Conventional herds using Kingshay Dairy Manager

It may only be a few minor "tweaks" to an already efficient and profitable business, but there's always room for improvement. The Dairy Costings Focus Report highlighted that the main cost savings could be obtained by making the most of forage, particularly as feed costs are high. The hardest hit herds were the bottom 25% (ranked by milk from forage), which lost 4% on last year. A higher reliance on purchased feed increases exposure to any market price increases.

Milk from Forage Milk Map



The Kingshay Milk Map is a useful tool to compare feed efficiency. Herds lying on the top of the green band achieve higher yields from similar feed rates. Plot your herd's current position on the Milk Map, but also where you target your herd to be next year.

Compare to others

Analyse your herd performance and discover the "pinch point" of performance. Is it health, fertility, nutrition/forage quality or a range of other factors? The most profitable producers using Kingshay Profit Manager spend time carefully analysing each cost factor, getting value for money and evaluating the cost benefits of investments. Often you have to spend money to make money.

Set achievable targets for next year.

When setting objectives for next year, it is important to keep them "S.M.A.R.T." and to keep the number to a few key targets.

Call Kingshay to evaluate your business performance and help set key objectives 01458 851555

Specific
Measurable
Agreed
Realistic
Timebound

in this issue

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Kingshay
INDEPENDENT DAIRY SPECIALISTS

RECENT MAILINGS

Twice a month, Kingshay's farmer, consultant and vet members receive Farming Notes, along with a monthly checklist and have access to previous ones in the members area of the website at www.kingshay.com. Here are some highlights from those produced in recent months:

Cull cow options - when is it profitable to keep and finish cull cows and when it is not? Be sure to get the sums right and consider all the options.

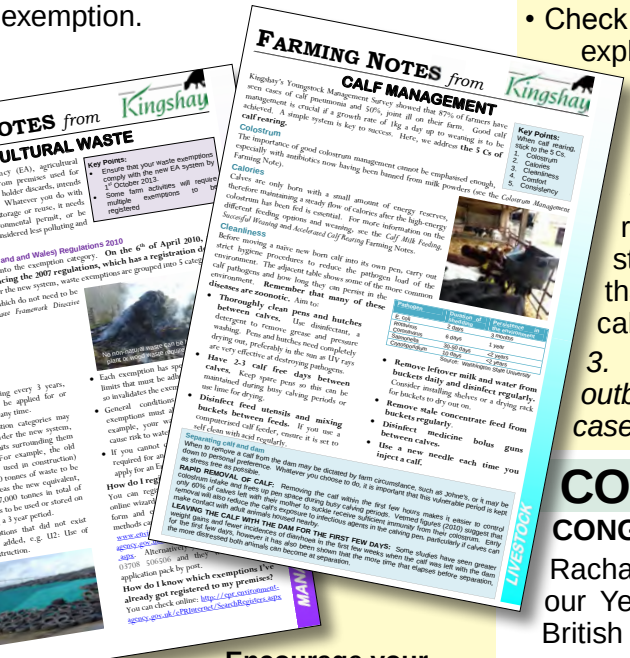
Mycoplasma - cases in the UK are up on previous estimates. Watch out for calf pneumonia, joint infections and mastitis which might indicate a Mycoplasma problem.

Feeding replacement heifers - physical development is more important than age for determining maturity, so diets which keep up growth rates are essential.

Calf management - target growth rates up to weaning at 1kg a day for optimum lifetime performance and achieve it with the '5 Cs of calf rearing'.

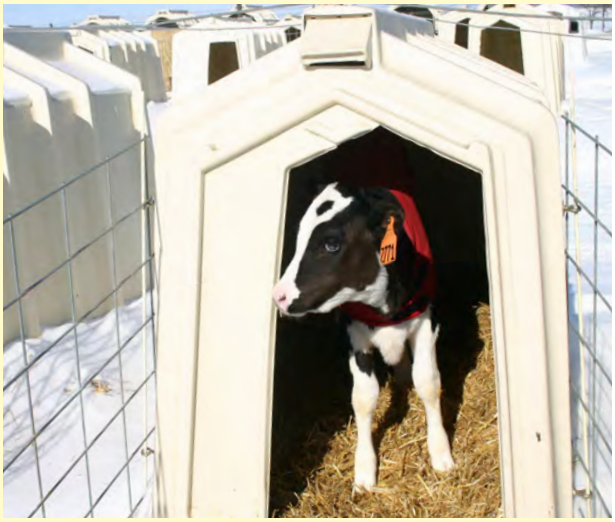
CAP Reform – DEFRA's plan for 2015-2020 has been announced, outlining what dairy farmers can expect from this essential income stream.

Agricultural Waste - whatever you do with your waste, it must be covered by an Environment Agency (EA) permit or be registered as an exemption.



Encourage your friends & neighbours to join - the more members we have, the more independent work we can do for you.

CALF WINTER HEALTH CHECK



Winter can often bring with it an onslaught of potential stressors for your youngstock. Here are some areas to focus on this winter to keep your calves in top condition.

Colostrum:

It's repeated again and again but the importance of good colostrum management cannot be emphasised enough. Feed 10% of a calf's body weight in the first 6 hours and again before 12 hours has passed is the general rule; however this will depend on quality. Talk to your vet about blood testing some of your calves in their first few days to check that they are receiving good levels of antibodies. Order a colostrometer on www.kingshay.com.

Pathogen pressures:

As young calves have relatively low levels of immunity, try to minimise the pathogen load of the environment and the disease challenge to the naïve calf.

1. Incorporate strict hygiene measures in protocols. Disinfect and dry pens/ hutches and rest them for 2-3 days between calves. Feed utensils, mixing buckets and medicine bolus guns should be disinfected after each use and leftover milk/water removed from buckets daily.

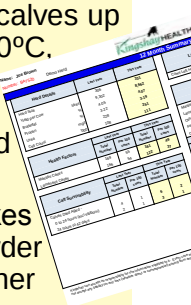
2. Good ventilation in calf buildings is vital, particularly when the housed period is as mild as it has been so far this year.

- Check that the stack effect is being exploited and modify buildings where needed.
- Pen oldest calves downwind from the youngest.
- Ensure that you have the recommended airspace and stocking rate and be aware that these will change as the calves grow.

3. If you have a pneumonia outbreak, catch and treat cases early on by monitoring rectal temperatures, rather than just firefighting by treating the more established symptomatic cases. Animals with temperatures over 39.5ºC (103ºF) are more likely to be infected. Check that your antibiotic also contains an anti-inflammatory or administer separately, to reduce permanent lung damage.

Cold stress:

Once environmental temperatures drop below a calf's lower critical temperature (LCT), an increasing amount of their energy intake will be used to maintain body temperature and this will compromise growth rates and immunity. The LCT of calves up to 4 weeks old is about 10ºC, whilst calves over 4 weeks are able to cope down to 0ºC. To reduce risk of cold stress:



- Increase energy intakes by upping milk powder concentration in cold weather
- Keep bedding clean, dry and plentiful
- Consider using calf jackets.
- Avoid draughts, particularly ground draughts.
- Ensure outside hutches are on free-draining concrete or a porous base and have shelter available out of the wind and rain.

Note that ventilation should never be compromised to raise the temperature of a calf building.

COMPETITION WINNERS

CONGRATULATIONS

Rachael Hall from South Acre Farm, near York won our Year Planner Prize Draw to win a Best of British Hamper.

If you would like additional copies of our 2014 Year Planner, just call us on 01458 851555 or email contact.us@kingshay.co.uk (subject to availability)

NEW FORAGE COSTS REPORT

Forage forms the basis for all livestock rations and the better the forage quality, the greater the potential to increase livestock profitability. Feeding low quality forage results in the need for greater amounts of expensive purchased feeds to achieve the desired milk yield or growth rates.

Improving milk from forage results in a higher Margin Over Purchased Feeds for all levels of production. Whatever your cows' yield, the higher the quality of forage consumed, the greater potential to maximise output and reduce costs.

Kingshay Dairy Manager data shows that the top 25% of herds, ranked by milk from forage, averaged 3,378 litres per cow from forage, compared with 628 litres per cow for the bottom 25%. Home produced forages cost less than purchased feeds, providing the right crop is grown and it is managed well to optimise growth, conservation and utilisation.

Managing forage crops to maximise yield and quality may cost more but this is outweighed by lower feed costs resulting from savings in purchased.

For example, grazing a good quality grass plus clover sward will give you a cheaper cost per tonne of forage dry matter and a lower cost per litre of milk produced compared with old pasture, despite costing more per acre to produce (see adjacent table).

Growing alternative forages can also help to improve the efficiency of land use and increase the production of quality forages, helping to improve cow margins.

To help you select the right forages for your farm and compare their relative value read the recently published **Kingshay Forage Costings 2014 Report**. Copies of the new report have been distributed to members and are available to non-members at a cover price of £80.

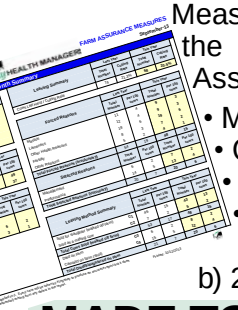
Comparison of costs for different quality of grazed grass

Typical Yield & Quality	Grazed grass	Grass + White clover	Old pasture
Fresh Yield (t/ac)	31	31	24
Dry Matter (%)	17	17	17
Utilised Dry Matter Yield (t/ac)	3.9	3.9	3.0
Energy (MJ/KG DM)	11.5	11.5	10.5
Crude Protein %	17	19	15
	Cash Costs (not including land rent)		
Cost per acre (£)	250	192	170
Cost per tonne fresh weight (£)	8	6	7
Cost per tonne utilised dry matter (£)	63	49	56
Relative value (£)	227	238	204
Cost per litre of milk (p)	2.5	1.3	2.9
Cost/kg LWG (p)	16.4	8.6	19.0

FARM ASSURANCE REPORT

We are currently developing a new report to be included in the Health Manager & Premium packages for Dairy Manager herds.

This report includes your herd's 'Key Measures' required for the Red Tractor Farm Assurance Scheme:



- Mastitis & Lameness
- Culling Rates
- Involuntary Culls
- Calf Mortality
  a) 0 to 24 hours
  b) 24 hours to 42 days

It is a requirement for all farms to record these measures from 1st October 2013.

The Farm Assurance report is designed to save time by having all your measures on one, easy to read report. Just print it out and hand it to your assessor.

Further details of the measures can be found at: **http://assurance.redtractor.org.uk/rtassurance/farm/dairy** and go to "October 2013 Standard Changes"

Call us for details 01458 851555.

STARLING RESEARCH

Kingshay has completed two years of research, funded by DairyCo, to find the most effective methods of starling control.

"Where bird numbers are high, they can eat cattle feed worth £1.06 a cow a day", says Jo Shipton of Kingshay. "There is no one solution to controlling starling numbers, but putting out dairy cow rations in the afternoon, rather than the morning, can discourage them and reduce feed losses. Doing this as one of a number of mitigation methods, either together or switching between different ones, and starting them before starlings get into the routine of visiting the farm, will help."

A Farming Note summarising worthwhile mitigation methods has been prepared for members and a copy of the full report is available from the DairyCo and Kingshay websites.

The full report can be found here: **www.kingshay.co.uk/kingshay/Technical/HerdManagement/StarlingReport**

MADE TO MEASURE FOR COMFY COWS – THE M2M CUBICLE

Pete Dutton's cows took to the newly fitted M2M cubicles straight away.

Designed and developed by Kingshay and marketed by GEA, great satisfaction is taken from seeing the M2M cubicles now being fitted on farms.

The unique patent pending 38 degree design provides simultaneous neck rail adjustment for both height and length. Kingshay member Pete Dutton, who milks 340 autumn calving cows in West Sussex, is one of the first to have the M2M fitted in his buildings. He comments, "We have recently amalgamated our two herds into one, which has involved extending and improving the accommodation on the unit. We fitted 160 M2M cubicles and changed over to a sand bedding system. Our cows absolutely love them; the M2Ms are always full while the other types are left empty. Our cows are on the smaller side but the sloping top rail of the cubicle division has enabled us to set the neck rail at the correct distance forward from the heelstone and height above the bed to get them lying just right."

Call us to discuss your cow housing plans.

To order the M2M cubicle, telephone GEA Farm Technologies on 02476 692 333.

AVOID FALLING FOUL OF SSAFO REGULATIONS

Will Philips is a Director for P&L Agri Consulting, one of our Associate Consultants. He specialises in buildings and cow housing knowledge. Here he talks us through the latest changes to the SSAFO regulations.

Q: What are SSAFO regulations?

A: These are the main rules which cover silage, slurry and oil storage on farms. They stipulate the size and design of storage and measures to reduce pollution risks. They are enforceable by the Environment Agency (England), Natural Resources Wales, The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and The Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

Q: Who needs to be aware of them?

A: All farmers, but particularly livestock farmers. These are the basic requirements for pollution prevention and apply to everybody, including those outside Nitrate Vulnerable Zones. NVZ requirements are added on to the SSAFO regulations. For example, the SSAFO regs normally require four months of slurry storage, whereas NVZ regs require five months.

Q: Do they only apply to facilities built or extended since 1991?

A: Silage and slurry facilities built before 1991 are exempt from these regulations, but the relevant agency can serve notice to take action if there is a risk of pollution. It's worth assessing if your pre-1991 facilities pose a risk and if improvements are needed.

Q: Has anything changed recently?

A: Yes. A major change is that now you must inform the EA (in England) at least 14 days before you start construction on a silage or slurry store, previously it was 14 days before use. Make sure you check the current rules for your location in the UK.

Another major change is that in England, from January 2014, the SSAFO regs (excluding fuel oil) will be linked to Cross Compliance in NVZ areas. Rural Payments Agency inspectors will report breaches of SSAFO regs which could mean a 3-5% Single Farm Payment penalty, if it's an unintentional breach or considerably more if it's deemed to be intentional.

Q: Can you tell us some of the common failures to meet the SSAFO regs?

a) Lagoons which are not constructed to meet BS5502 guidelines and being able to prove they are impermeable, using soil impermeablility tests and building them large enough.

b) Having too little slurry storage by getting the calculations wrong, including not using high enough rainfall figures. You must also deduct the 'freeboard' area (300mm a tower or solid sided stores and 750mm for lagoons) from the actual depth or height when calculating storage capacities.

c) Reception pits may be too small. Usually they need to take at least 48 hours of slurry plus any rainfall going to the pit, based on the highest rainfall that could occur over 48 hours.

d) Leaking gutters mean that excess water gets into the slurry store reducing its overall capacity.

e) Making more silage than will fit in the clamp, which means that effluent is uncontrolled. All effluent must be contained in a suitable store.

TSB IMAGING

Kingshay has just been awarded funding by the Technology Strategy Board for an exciting new 3 year project, in collaboration with the Centre for Machine Vision at the University of the West of England.

Body condition scoring, liveweight and mobility scoring are strongly encouraged as a way of monitoring cow health and welfare and improving nutrition management, however in reality they are underused due to a lack of time and the subjectivity of the visual assessment.

This new joint venture seeks to develop innovative 3D imaging technology, which will enable precise, reliable and frequent measurement of these traits on-farm in an unobtrusive and stress-free way. Collected data can then be used to influence management decisions and to benchmark individual cows, creating greater opportunities to improve cow performance and welfare.

We will be giving members regular updates as the project develops so watch this space!

NEW TEAM MEMBER

Katrina Houlden recently joined the Farm Services team to work on the Carbon Footprinting project.

A local girl, hailing from a farming family near Wells, Katrina graduated from The Royal Agricultural University this summer with a BSc.(Hons) in Food Production and Supply Management. In her spare time Katrina enjoys spending time with her horse and pet ferret and being a member of a local Young Farmers Club.

COMING SOON.....

Our new Cow Comfort Report, featuring the results from Kingshay's Cow Comfort Survey taken this year at the Livestock Event and Dairy Show