

# News

*Providing practical support to professional producers*

## FERTILITY FOCUS: ARE YOUR COSTS MOUNTING UP?

Is your herd meeting the fertility targets you set and improving year on year? Kingshay's Health Manager data shows that the top 25% of herds are achieving a calving interval of 392 days compared to the group average of 412 days. With extended calving intervals estimated to cost between £4 and £6 per cow per day due to loss of milk production and service costs, now is the time to get on top of fertility.

There are many approaches that can be taken to improve herd fertility, however with the UK average oestrus detection rate currently standing at only 50% and each missed heat costing an estimated £107, critiquing how your farm manages heat detection is a good

place to start to boost your herd's profit. It is estimated that 10% of cows never show behavioural signs of oestrus; are these cows falling through the net on your farm or is your fertility management system up to the challenge?

Our latest Tried and Tested Report on Heat Detection Methods will be published in the next few weeks. Kingshay members have given their feedback and experiences on a wide range of methods, from visual detection to the latest electronic pedometers. This report will include some

straight-talking views and 'no-frills' opinions to help you decide which heat detection methods are worth their weight in gold and which are a load of bull.

*To receive this report and all the other benefits of Kingshay membership, contact the office on 01458 851555. If you are interested in benchmarking your herd's health and fertility data, speak to us about how our Health Manager service can help you evaluate the financial implications and focus on key areas for improvement. Sign up today and get the first 2 months free.*

Kingshay Heat Detection Tried and Tested



Kingshay  
INDEPENDENT DAIRY SPECIALISTS

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Twice a month Kingshay's farmer, consultant and vet members receive Farming Notes 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:

**Feeding the Calf** - Many farmers use a traditional restricted system to feed their young calves but how does this compare to alternative options?

**Anaerobic Digestion** - Anaerobic digesters can provide an opportunity to integrate farm cropping and manure management. They can reduce energy costs and improve farm energy sustainability and the efficiency of manure management, whilst potentially providing an extra income stream.

**Basic Payment Scheme 2015** - Following the release of further guidance on the Basic Payment Scheme, this Farming Note summarises the key points to assist your cropping plans ahead of your claim next May.

**Effective Farm Lighting** - Light hours affect milk production and immunity, making good lighting an essential part of a dairy farm. Are LEDs worth the investment and what is the most cost effective way to light your farm?

## TURNIP TEASER

The Bridge Farm herd has finished grazing Kingshay's 2014 Summer Turnip Trial which compared 5 varieties: Apin, Delilah, Samson, Tyfon and Vollenda. The yields of both tops and roots were weighed and nutritionally analysed. Cows were strip grazed across the plots to allow grazing preferences to also be assessed. All of the results will be published in a Members report next spring, ahead of variety selection decisions.



## CONGRATULATIONS!



The Kingshay Trophy is awarded each year by the Royal Agricultural University to the student with the best dairy related dissertation. This year's winner was Emily Mitchem for her feed trial study into the effect that Nutritionally Improved Straw has on productivity and rumen pH when fed as part of a total mixed ration.

Emily was top student 3 years in a row and achieved a first class Bachelor of Science degree with honours in agriculture, specialising in livestock.

Currently enjoying travelling in America, Emily will soon return to Devon to join the family farm where no doubt her nutritional knowledge will assist in the dairy herd management.

## DAIRY MANAGER UPDATE

The latest results from herds using Kingshay Dairy Manager show the seasonal fall in daily milk output, although the May, June and July production is still around 0.5 litres per cow per day above last year. As illustrated in the table below, monthly margins have also declined by 6% to £157 per cow, although feed costs are 5% lower than last year.

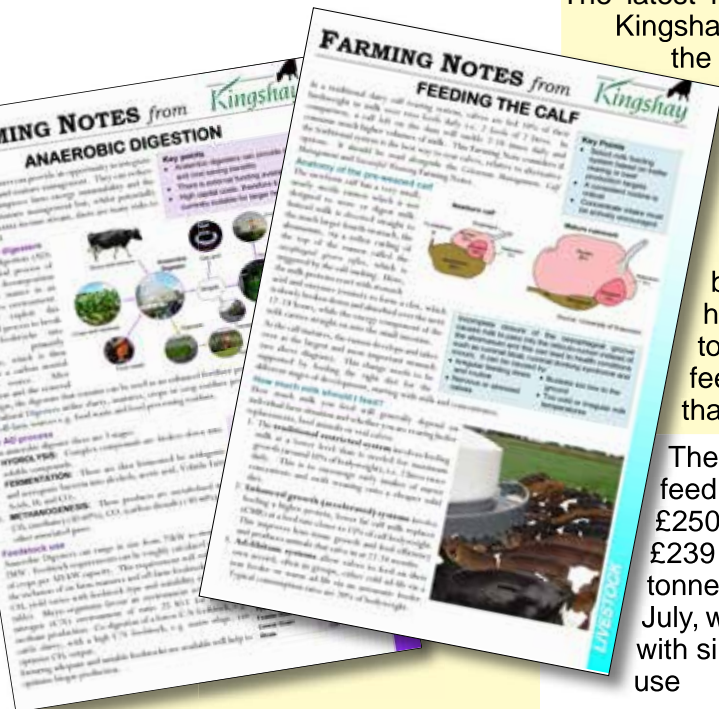
resulted in total feed costs dropping by 5% relative to last year, to 7.7ppl.

With feed raw material prices falling further, this downward trend may go some way to counter recent milk price cuts, but these cuts will still have a significant impact on profitability. In these challenging times, it's more important than ever to evaluate your full costs of production to assess how the cuts will impact on your financial position. Discuss with us how our Profit Manager Service can assist with developing a plan going forward.

For the full July 2014 results visit: [www.kingshay.com/dairy-costings/latest-results](http://www.kingshay.com/dairy-costings/latest-results)

The costs of concentrate feed has fallen from a high of £250 per tonne last winter to £239 per tonne in July, which with similar use has

Monthly Results	May-14	Jun-14	Jul-14
Milk Yield (l/cow/day)	26.7	25.8	25.5
Milk from Forage (l/cow/day)	10.1	8.9	8.4
Milk Price (ppl)	32.1	31.8	31.9
Concentrate Use (kg/cow/day)	7.3	7.4	7.4
MOPF (£/cow)	£180	£161	£157



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

The growing season of 2014 has been a mixed bag for UK dairy farmers. While on the one hand, unsettled weather delayed 1<sup>st</sup> cut for many producers, excellent grass growing conditions through most of the summer resulted in a forage boom, the likes of which has not been seen for many years!

## Early assessments

It was certainly a year where those who planned for and cut silage in early May benefited from better quality 1<sup>st</sup> cut and took better subsequent cuts – illustrating the fact that grass grows grass.

Samples of 1<sup>st</sup> cut grass silage received in the Kingshay office suggest that those who managed to cut in early May have produced some reasonable quality silage (11 MJ/kg DM of ME), although some are showing very low NDF. If this is the case on your farm, care will need to be taken to ensure that ration fibre requirements are met, particularly with high yielders. Analysis from later first cuts are typically more challenging to balance within a ration, with lower feed values.

Maize crops have also benefited from the excellent growing season, with some early crops already

harvested. In normal conditions the dry matter of a crop will increase by 1.5 to 2.0% per week, so it's essential that crops are regularly assessed to select an appropriate harvest date. The Kingshay maize trial sites will be ready to harvest soon and with several varieties well over 9 foot tall, early indications suggest that yields will exceed the ten year average, with well-formed cobs indicating good starch content.

Members who harvested wholecrop cereals have also reported high yields, with some at 10 tonnes fresh weight per acre, but disease pressures following a wet autumn and spring are likely to have increased the cost of growing wholecrop.

## Planning ahead

It is important that you take the time to undertake a winter feed budget for all stock. This, in conjunction with a milk budget, will allow diets to be created for each group of stock to determine the allocation of forage per animal. Housing and turnout date for youngstock will have a big influence, as DMI increases through the winter with age. By planning ahead and regularly assessing performance and forage use, you can predict what's needed when to allow you to forward buy tactically.



## SILAGE ANALYSIS

Full 'Feed Into Milk' analysis of grass, maize & wholecrop

**PLUS**  
Discuss your results with the Kingshay Technical Team

**Members Price**  
Only £12.50 per sample

**01458 851 555**

*If you would like to discuss the forage situation on your farm, call the Technical Team in the office.*



## COME AND SEE US

Kingshay will be exhibiting at The Dairy Show on the 1<sup>st</sup> October at the Bath & West Showground. Find us on **Stand 175 in the Edmund Rack Building** to discuss our latest report and try your luck in our **AI Straw Draw!**

## FIRST MILK FARMERS VISIT IBERS

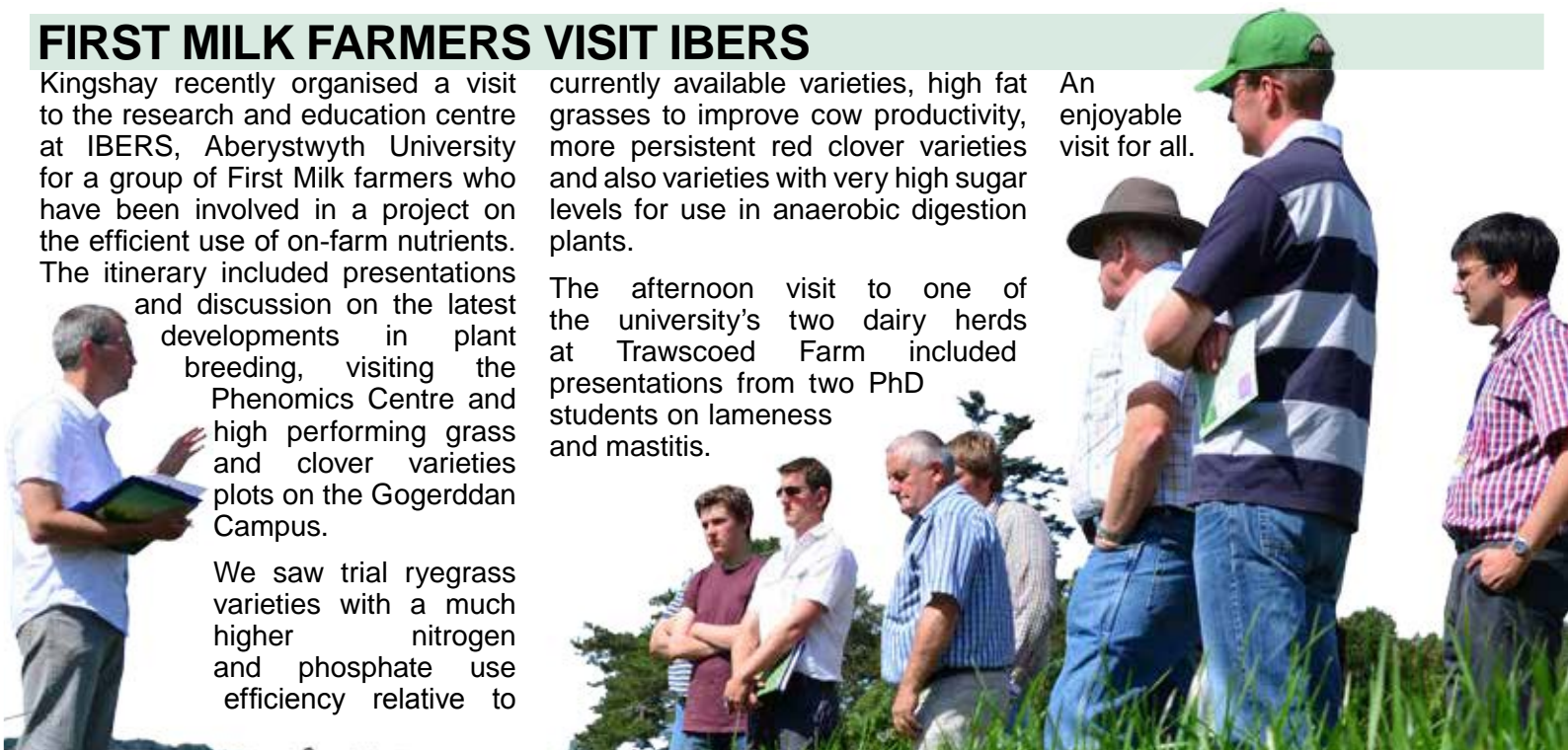
Kingshay recently organised a visit to the research and education centre at IBERS, Aberystwyth University for a group of First Milk farmers who have been involved in a project on the efficient use of on-farm nutrients. The itinerary included presentations and discussion on the latest developments in plant breeding, visiting the Phenomics Centre and high performing grass and clover varieties plots on the Gogerddan Campus.

We saw trial ryegrass varieties with a much higher nitrogen and phosphate use efficiency relative to

currently available varieties, high fat grasses to improve cow productivity, more persistent red clover varieties and also varieties with very high sugar levels for use in anaerobic digestion plants.

The afternoon visit to one of the university's two dairy herds at Trawscoed Farm included presentations from two PhD students on lameness and mastitis.

An enjoyable visit for all.



# MUSINGS OF A KINGSHAY CONSULTANT



John Bennett combines his work as a Kingshay consultant with his duties as a partner on his family dairy farm in Somerset. Since John joined the team, he has built up a portfolio of consultancy work and has been the main deliverer of our **HowsMyHerd™** package.

As we head into winter, John shares key points from time spent on clients' farms, focussing on five areas that have stuck out to him as having the biggest potential for improvement.

**Cubicles:** We get lots of calls and queries from members needing cubicles adjusting, however it is obviously a lot easier to get it right in the first place than it is to change an existing setup! Before the purchase of cubicles I strongly advise a visit to our cubicle demonstration unit to avoid commonly seen set-up problems in new installations e.g. cows lying diagonally or too far forward or

mattresses which don't stand the test of time. There is a vast amount of experience and data at Kingshay on cubicle design and comfort.

**Mastitis and cell count issues:** Issues causing high rates of mastitis and elevated cell counts are many and variable, rarely is there a golden bullet solution. Old habits die hard, so acknowledging that you have a problem and being prepared to change before seeking help is vital.

**Ventilation:** Time and again this is an issue on farms however in reality it shouldn't be because it is one of the most cost effective problems to solve! Spending a few hours removing boarding and sheeting from sides of buildings and opening ridges will have a massive effect on increasing airflow. Some worry that they will expose the herd to the elements, however in most cases the occurrence of bad weather will be significantly outweighed by all the days of benefit.

**Profitability:** When looking to increase profitability, focus on what is under your control and prioritise

the changes that will make the most impact. A 20% decrease in vet costs will take a lot of effort, will seldom be instant and will potentially only save 0.2ppl. In comparison, just a 10% improvement in feed efficiency will often save 1ppl and take much less effort.

**Benchmarking:** I've been surprised by firstly, how few people measure their farm's performance and secondly, how quickly those that do benchmark accept their figures and don't push to improve them. To progress as a dairy farm today it's all about recording what you're doing, benchmarking to others and building on it.

*To speak to John or any of the other Kingshay consultants or to arrange a HowsMyHerd visit to your farm, contact the office.*

## NEW ASSOCIATE



David Owen has recently joined as an associate consultant member of Kingshay. David owns and runs Owen Farm Services which provides practical advice to

farmers in South West Scotland. The company primarily advises dairy farms, as well as helping with IACS and grant applications.

David enjoys working with clients to solve their particular business needs, be it technical or financial. He believes that "an ongoing relationship is not only a rewarding experience,

but is also crucial to understanding clients' businesses and aims". His specialist areas are dairy cows and computers, with a particular interest in robotic milking. The consultancy he offers for robotic herds aims to provide continual background checking to highlight problems before they become a significant issue. Technology plays a huge role in this, allowing David to access client's information in a safe and reportable way bringing cows and technology together for a practical benefit.

David's other specialist areas of interest include NVZ's (PLANET software) and budgeting. He also builds and runs clients' websites on an ongoing basis as he says "the combination of cows and computers keeps me happy!"

To contact David, call Kingshay on 01458 851 555.

Release your herd's true potential with a **HowsMyHerd** assessment



One of our experienced consultants will visit your farm. Experts in 'reading' cows they will review and scrutinise:

- Cow comfort
- Mastitis
- Nutrition
- Lameness
- Fertility
- Cow flow

To book your assessment call: 01458 851555

## COMPETITION WINNER



Congratulations to dairy farmer Matthew Rowe from Liskeard, Cornwall who was the winner of our prize draw at this year's Livestock Event. Here he is shown receiving a Somerset hamper from Kingshay's Duncan Forbes.



## COMING SOON...

We are currently developing a new **Dairy Manager website**, which will improve usability and enable users to save data on every page. If you use Dairy Manager costings and would like to use the website, contact Kingshay to be set up with web access.

The **Tried and Tested Heat Detection Report** featuring results from the Kingshay Heat Detection Survey.