



GRAZING MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Dairy Holdings grazing management policy focusses on harvesting large quantities of quality pasture while maintaining a low cost structure. Grazing management is based on maximising the production of high quality pasture through the whole season. This is achieved by grazing intensity (residual management) and frequency (round length). The amount of cover will affect the quality of feed as well as the quantity able to be grown.

SPRING MANAGEMENT

Holding a strict round until balance date is fundamental to ensure cows are well feed during mating and peak. Dairy Holdings achieve this through the **Spring Rotation Planner (SRP)** (Refer to appendix A1 or the company website for electronic version). The SRP determines how much area should be allocated each day working towards balance date – when growth equals demand. This is managed alongside the farms cover targets. The SRP will typically work from a 110 day round at the start of August and finish on a 22-26 day round by the end of September.

Paddocks also need to be grazed out to set up the rest of the season. To ensure the correct amounts of feed are being allocated, farm walks need to be done on a weekly basis. This is a priority regardless of how busy the farm is. Residuals should range between 1450-1550 kg DM/ha.

Filling Pasture Deficits.

- Any pasture deficits must be fixed before “Balance Date”.
- Pasture deficits are in danger of occurring when grazing residuals are dropping below 1400 kgs DM / ha.
- Filling pasture deficits is only profitable when sufficient feed is put in to hold an appropriate rotation length and to lift the grazing residual of milking cows to 1,400 kg DM/ha.

There is a formal process for getting authorisation to fill any pasture deficit.

Step One

- The Farm Operator must put a case with all the relevant pasture cover, rotation length, growth rate and demand data to their Farm Supervisor.
- Weekly farm walks should be able to show this situation developing.
- All other reasonable actions to prevent this situation developing need to have been done.
- There needs to be a plan going forward that maximises the value of any extra feed provided to get the farm cover back on track.

Step Two

- The Farm Supervisor runs the request and supporting information past the Farm Practice Advisor.
- If there is missing information, or mitigation actions have not been taken, the process to get to a decision will be delayed.
- The Farm Practice Advisor will either support the application as it stands or suggest a modification.
- A recommendation is put to the CEO.

Step Three

- The supplement purchase is authorised from head office which holds all the contracts for this additional feed.
- Any feed will only be provided for a unit load at a time.
- The situation will be revised prior to each unit load running out.

MID SPRING/SUMMER MANAGEMENT

Quality control is important during this period to ensure productivity is maintained and good mating performance is achieved. Round length should range between 20-24 days. This is also the time to ensure the bulk of regressing is completed and quality is controlled through harvesting surpluses.

The key decision tool to do this is the Agrinet Pasture Management software. Being able to interpret the Pasture wedge each week and make proactive decisions is essential. The Farm Practice Advisor is available to train you in the use of this tool.

From mid-October or when pasture growth is higher than demand farm walks are advised to be done every 4 to 5 days and no longer than weekly. Surpluses need to be identified early, contractors organised and managed according. Residuals should be maintained between 1450 and 1550 during this period. The function of harvesting surpluses is to manage pasture quality and this needs to be continued even if the weather is marginal for proper wilting.

All the information on Agrinet is visible to your Supervisor and the Farm Practice Advisor. Both are available as a resource to help Farm Operators successfully manage their farms.

Your Supervisor monitors the frequency of farm walks, and key pasture management information each week. Regular farm walks and effective use of the pasture wedge are key performance areas for each farm manager.

A summary of each farms pasture data is made available on the DHL web site each week.

AUTUMN MANAGEMENT

Setting up the next season as well as capturing days in milk is the focus over the autumn period. This includes meeting BCS and cover targets by the 1st June. Refer to the more detailed **Autumn Management Plan Policy**.

Post-heading, pastures will become more vegetative allowing for higher average covers to be managed without compromising quality. Generally this occurs late December to early January and is season dependent. Monitoring leaf stage and when heading has ended is important for understanding when the round length can be extended. Once this is identified a generally rule of thumb is to extend the round by 5 days per month. As the round extends the farms average and pre-graze covers will also increase. The table below illustrates this.



Table: Example of extending autumn round length and cover targets for an 800 cow farm on 240ha where heifers are to be wintered on the farm.

Month Ending	31-Dec	31-Jan	28-Jan	31-Mar	30-Apr	31-May
Round Length	25	25-30	30-35	40	40-45	40-50
Production	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.1
Avg. Cover Target	2222	2333	2433	2522	2625	2200
Pre-Graving Cover target	2944	3167	3367	3544	3750	2900

Monitoring pastures should be done on a weekly basis through the autumn. Culling is used to manage demand along with the feeding out of any previously harvested surpluses on the farm. Late decisions ultimately cost money and affect farm performance. Residual targets through the autumn remain between 1500-1600kg DM/ha. Any paddocks that are higher will need to be grazed out by the last round.

Timely culling is crucial to reduce demand while growth rates are declining. If a farm becomes under pressure and MT or other culls are known your supervisor should be contacted to discuss the best plan of action.

Once culls have gone, farms need to manage demand by progressively drying off cows to reduce demand.

The farm must be managed to achieve the 1st June target cover.

Farm Operators finishing their contracts are charged 150% of the cost of filling any deficit below this target cover. Farm Operators with continuing contracts should protect their farm cover as if they would be charged in the same way.

During the last round the farm will need to have a paddock plan in place that identifies the following:

- When paddocks need to be dropped out for springers, colostrum's and dries.
- Identifying poor performing paddocks for regrassing in the spring. These paddocks can be closed up early and kept for dry cows and/or springers.

Use of purchased feed to extent lactation.

In the past additional purchased supplements were used to extend lactation. All farms now need to meet strict N leaching limits and so extending lactation through the use of purchased feed is no longer an acceptable practice.

WINTER MANAGEMENT

Any stock on farm over the winter need to be managed to ensure potential damage to pasture is minimised. Over the winter pasture cover needs to be monitored on a 10 day to fortnightly basis.

This is also an ideal time to train first calving heifers to the milking shed.

USEFUL READINGS

A1.1 The importance of grazing management, Kevin McDonald, Dexcel.

A1.2 Weathering the future: Resilience to weather events, sustainable systems and decision rules, Kevin McDonald & Phillipa Hedley, DairyNZ.



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