

Feeding the Dairy Cow

With grass growth rates lower than expected for the time of year and average farm covers dipping what can we do at farm level to hold milk production?

Farmers must first ensure to walk the farm every 5 days, this will allow the farmer to act on decreases/increases in grass growth as they happen.

Current Grazing Targets	
Average Farm Cover	>600kg DM/ha
Rotation Length	21-24 days
Pre Grazing yield	>1200kg DM/ha
Cover per cow	150-200kg DM/LU

Dairy farms in the region should be targeting an AFC (average farm cover) >600kg DM/ha. If AFC drops below 600kg DM/ha an additional feed source must be introduced to bridge the gap. It is vital to hold rotation length at 21-24 days. This will prevent grass from being completely removed from the diet.

Tips to help increase AFC

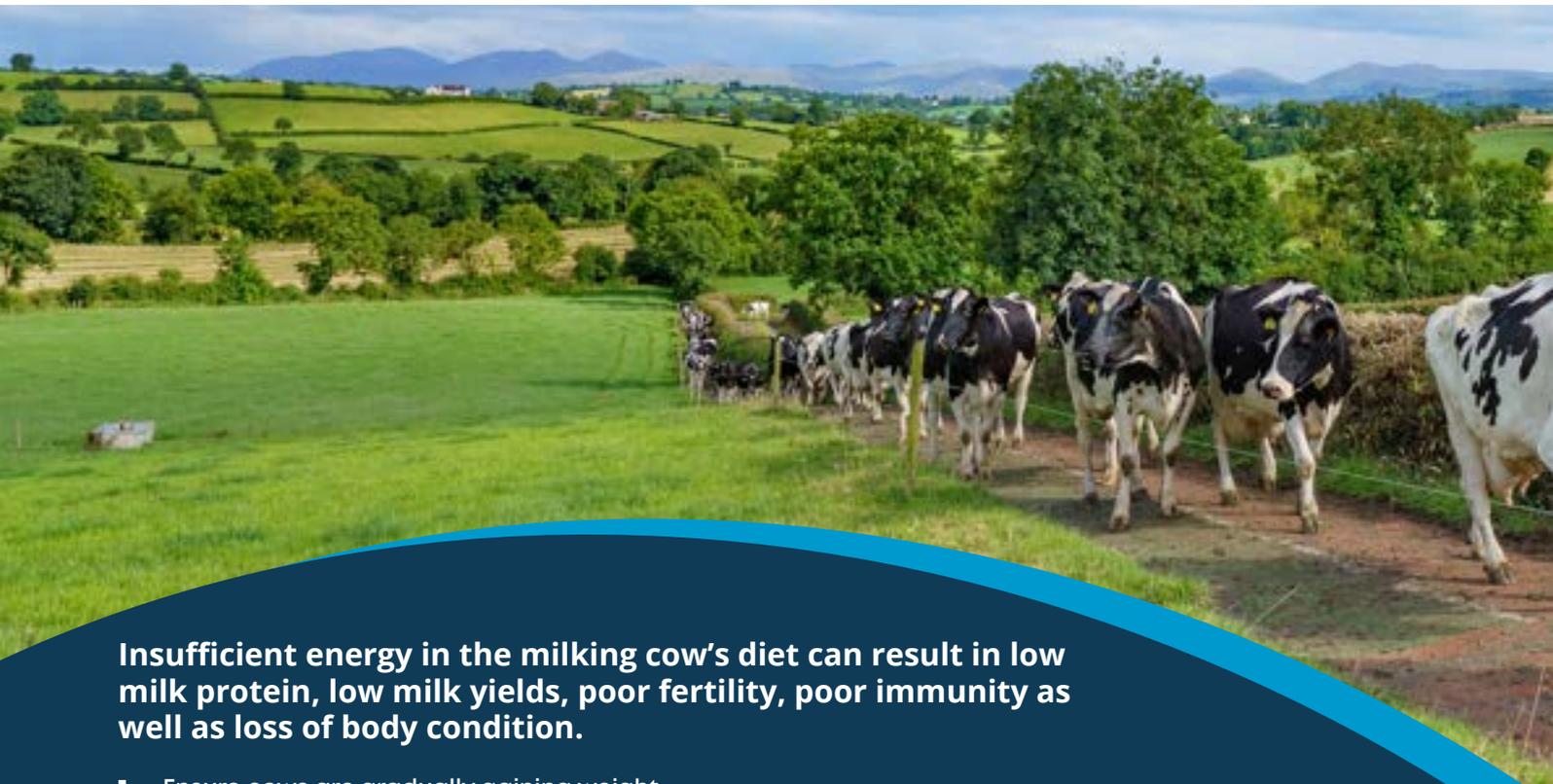
1. Introduce 3-4kg per cow of high-quality silage to the diet.
2. Increase supplementation of meal in the parlor.
3. Match herd demand with current growth rates.

If cows do not receive adequate feed, energy levels will begin to drop in the cows diet.

For herds that are currently grazing farmers should watch residuals (target 4cm) to make sure cows are cleaning paddocks, but not being pinched on intake and ensure supplementation of any deficits of grass in good time.

To reach a high peak output from the dairy cow you must ensure the cow receives her peak intake. High intakes of high-quality feed drives high performance. Cows should be allocated 20-22kg of grass DM per day in good growing weeks, this should achieve a peak intake of 18kg of grass DM.

An increase of 1% in grass digestibility will increase dry matter intake by 0.3-0.4kg DM and milk yield by 0.25 litres.



Insufficient energy in the milking cow's diet can result in low milk protein, low milk yields, poor fertility, poor immunity as well as loss of body condition.

1. Ensure cows are gradually gaining weight.
2. Avoid fluctuations in dry matter/energy intake. Concentrates should not be used as substitute for good grassland management.
3. Avoid high protein supplements (more than 18%) during the breeding season.