

# Silage Campaign 2025



Joint Development Programme

Edition 1



Top Jobs before closing silage ground	
✓	Calculate your silage requirement
✓	Take soil samples/analyse soil results
✓	Assess silage sward quality
✓	Make the most from your slurry

**Silage makes up 25-33% of the annual feed budget on most farms depending on land type and stocking rate.**

The benefits of feeding high DMD silage are:

- ▶ improved forage intake
- ▶ higher level of milk solids and milk from forage
- ▶ better rumen health
- ▶ lower concentrate feeding levels

Cows fed high quality silage, 75+ DMD require 3-4kg less concentrate to achieve similar milk solids output than cows fed average quality, 68 DMD silage. Cows are also healthier and better able to cope with the stress of early lactation. This increases their chances of going back in calf. Dairy heifers fed >70 DMD silage have improved daily gains during their first winter and are more likely to be fit for breeding and remain in the herd.

Within the Co-op the average silage results are coming back at 68 DMD, this is suitable for dry cows in good body condition score and well below the requirement for milking cows.

Calculate the herd requirement	
Silage Dry Matter Intake Kg DM/day	
Dairy Cows	
▶ Dry	10-12
▶ Milking	12-14
Weanlings	4.5-6
Cattle (18-20mths)	7-9



## Target Silage DMD for Different Classes of Stock

75+	74	72	70	68	66
					
Fresh Autumn-Calving dairy cows	Spring-calving cows in milk Finishing cattle	Dairy young stock Growing cattle	Dry dairy cowpoor BCS Suckler cow in milk	Dry dairy cow good BCS	Dry Suckler cows

Guideline yields are 4.8 t DM/ha and up to 6.2 t DM/ha for silage harvested in mid-May to early June, respectively.

The requirement for high quality 74 DMD+ increases as milking platform (MP) stocking rate goes up. It is important to take this into account, ensuring you have enough silage of the correct quality along with a buffer of high-quality silage in case of unforeseen weather. When you include young stock 65% - 75% of silage needs to be high quality to meet herd requirements at a MP stocking rate of 2.5-3.2 respectively.

<b>Grass Growth</b> (T DM/Ha)	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>MP Stocking Rate</b> (Lu/Ha)	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>
Silage to milking cows (Kg DM) 74 DMD +	560	900
Silage to dry cows (Kg DM) 68DMD	770	770
Silage reserve (Kg DM) 74DMD+	400	400
Total silage required (Kg DM / cow)	1,740	2,070
% Quality silage*	55%	63%

It is important to check what silage stock is left over and include it in your fodder budget. A fodder budget template is attached.

## Preparation before closing silage ground:

### Soil sample

Poor soil fertility delays target yield being achieved, resulting in low DMD silage. While it is too late to alter soil fertility now, make a note for later in the year and ensure you are applying the correct level of P & k for the soil indexes. Poor soil fertility will delay recovery after 1st cut and can delay 2nd cut by three weeks. Create a plan for the year on when and how to improve ph and soil indexes.

### Assess silage sward quality

Ideally, silage ground will have been grazed tightly by young stock last autumn, especially on out blocks. This will ensure there is no dead material at the base of the sward. If ground was not grazed and there is dead material at the base of the sward, like Figure 1. Silage grounds need to be grazed before closing or DMD may be reduced by 6-7%. Graze off silage ground February/Early March before closing if this is the case. You want the base of the sward to look like Figure 2.



Figure 1



Figure 2

### Maximise your slurry

Silage ground has a high demand for P & k. Slurry should be targeted to this ground to help reduce the requirement for chemical fertiliser. 3,000 gallons of cattle slurry will supply most of your P & k requirement and about a third of N requirements. Ideally use your soil results when spreading slurry or fertiliser.

**Follow along for fertiliser recommendations or reach out to Lakeland Dairies Joint Programme for advice.**