

Agricultural Seeds – Grass & Clover – Maize – Fodder Crops – Forage Planning – Ensiling Products – Organic Seeds - Stewardship – Soil Management – Green Manure – Game Cover – Amenity Grass

Under Pressure?

The livestock industry is under pressure from the challenging markets and our bizarre climate. Many farmers have two key problems:

1. High yields of low quality forage, much of it low dry matter. This creates a need to source of palatable high energy & high protein feed to balance the ration, preferably of high DM%.
2. Soil damaged by grazing or field operations. When and how best to repair the soil?

In this newsletter we look at options to rectify both issues.

Grass Seed Availability

Reduction in the area of grass seed sown in the UK and Europe, plus a string of poor harvest years has conspired to reduce stocks of grass seed at a time when demand is strong. Damage to fields by grazing and field operations are likely to increase demand for seed this autumn.

Our advice to our customers is to purchase any seed that you definitely need this year as early as possible. This will guarantee availability and be assured of getting the best varieties before they run out.

Solving the Energy Gap – Wholecrop Cereals or Crimp Grain

Direct cut at 35-45% DM for 'High Grain' fermented wholecrop. Grain:Straw ratio and quality of straw determine ME. Spring barley has the highest energy density, followed by wheat, oats and then triticale. The latter crops can be cut high to optimise quality and the remaining straw mowed and baled separately. Wholecrop is only for farmers with silage clamps – Vermin can devastate baled wholecrop.

Can you buy from a local arable farmer? The advantage to them is: Early harvest in a challenging season. No storage & drying costs. No volunteers in the resulting stubble. Early entry for the following crop, or the opportunity to sow a catch crop with minimum tillage.

Because it is a high dry matter silage, wholecrop benefits from a good additive to optimise fermentation and critically, to reduce losses through secondary fermentation. The best additives also contain enzymes which breakdown some of the fibre in the straw – potentially increasing feed quality by more than 1 ME.

If wholecrop does not suit, why not harvest cereals early and have it crimped and ensiled. Early grain harvest assures that a crop is secure and you have a ration ready concentrate feed to turbo charge your forages. **Advice on the best products is available from Field Options or our agents.**



Solving the Energy Gap – Fodder Rape & Turnips

Though not useful for housed stock, you can take the pressure off feed stocks with catch crop Brassicas. Stubble Turnips are 11.0ME with 19% Protein. Rape 10.4 ME and similar protein, but has the potential to produce 25% more dry matter yield. Our best-selling option is **Autumn Keep GT** a blend of 40% Rape and 60% Turnips a combination of the best varieties available.

For the next few weeks there is also the opportunity to plant Scottish hardy Turnips, like **Massif**. These are very fast establishing, slower to mature but reaching 10-20% higher yield. They also have the benefit of good hardiness and better root anchorage – A real advantage when grazing with sheep.



Don't forget Mustard – Sowing to grazing in 7 weeks! Once you get to September, it is the only brassica option. Because it lacks hardiness plan to graze by mid- November. So you sow it last, but normally graze it first.

Solving the Energy Gap – Hurricane Ryegrass

Another option which you can CUT or GRAZE is **Hurricane II**. A unique blend, tested by NIAB which can be cut for excellent quality silage 8-9 weeks after planting. It has the advantage of good winter growth for repeat grazing, if required and exceptional spring growth. Normal 1st cut date from a late summer established crop will be end of April-1st week of May. It also lasts up to 18 months.



Solving the Energy Gap – Forward Buy Fodder Beet

12.6 ME & 12% Protein. Dry matter ranges from 14-20% DM depending on variety – Sugar Beet is 20-23% DM. Cereal or maize crimp, wholecrop and most concentrates are starch based feeds. There is a limit to how much starch you can easily feed without increasing acidosis risk. With beet, the energy comes from sugar & digestible fibre. Fodder beet has consistent feed quality. Book [now](#) for winter delivery period. Tips for buying:

1. Purchase clean or washed beet for best results.
2. If you use a feeder waggon, insist on stone free beet.
3. Clamp and cover with a breathable sheet to protect your investment from frost.
4. High dry matter beet should be chopped before feeding.

If you want details of local suppliers, contact Field Options



Soil Repair – Be Patient

The key rule is to be patient – Easier said than done after the weather we have been subjected to. Soil needs to be relatively dry to be effectively repaired. The cost of using an aerators or a grassland subsoiler is similar whether they are working in the right conditions or the wrong, so if you want a return on your investment, be patient.

If damage is limited to the top 6 inches, a heavy duty aerator is ideal. If damage is deeper you will need a subsoiler designed for use in grassland: **More information from Field Options.**

Subsoilers are designed to lift and crack the soil. This only happens when the subsoil is dry enough for it to crack, normally in the summer and autumn – though this year, because of the dry winter, they worked well in March.

DO NOT USE a subsoiler when the subsoil is wet and plastic – It won't work and can cause greater damage and you have incurred an unnecessary cost.



From This?



To This - How?

Clover Safe Herbicide

Since the loss of Alistell and other clover safe herbicides, many have advocated that farmers should not sow clover with their grass seed so that they can effectively control challenging weeds like chickweed and docks. The difficulty is that it is not easy to effectively establish clover in established grass.

Problem over? There is now a new chemical available on a SOLA called **Triad** which offers good control of Chickweed, Oilseed Rape, Charlock and many others, especially when combined with **Spruce**. The combination also has good activity against seedling docks up to 4 leaf stage plus redshank seedling thistles and many others. Ask your agrochemical supplier for more information on how and when to use this product or phone Field Options. Weed Control tips:

1. Kill off perennial weeds like couch & established docks in the previous crop.
2. Check establishing grass for weeds three weeks after sowing.
3. Do not spray until clovers are at the 3 trifoliate leaf stage.
4. Spray in the evening when young clover leaves fold shut.
5. Do not spray when there is a risk of frost.



Mz Excelerator Maize Starter

It has been a tough year for maize, but some crops are looking OK, some are even looking good. Our maize variety trials are certainly showing up more variation between varieties and management than normal. We must learn from what works and avoid what has not. We will arrange a series at our trial sites and winter meetings to discuss the results and what we have learned. The picture to the right shows the response (left) of 62 Kg/Ha (25 Kgs/Ac.) of **Mz Excelerator GT** fertilizer on 3rd July at our trial near Usk in Monmouthshire. It was drilled mid- May. We estimate the treated plot to be 7-10 days ahead!



For more information contact Field Options on 01544 262 500 or info@field-options.co.uk

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