

# Nutrition News

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## Maintaining milk constituents through spring turnout

At this time of year, the first rotation of grazing is well under way and farmers are looking to take advantage of an excellent source of protein and energy for milk production. Making the most of your grazed forage is essential for any successful dairy business, but the change of diet can also mean a drop in constituent levels if the transition to grass is not well managed.

### Keep the bugs in mind!

Remember that when you feed your cows, you are actually feeding the bacteria within the rumen. These bugs are the powerhouse of your dairy herd as they break feed and forage down into the nutrients the cows need to produce milk.

Sudden changes in diet disrupt the microbes, stress the cow and cause digestive upsets, such as acidosis. Introduce your herd back to grazing over a period of several weeks, gradually increasing the access to pastures to allow the rumen bugs time to adapt.



### Watch out for signs of decreased rumen function in your herd such as:

- Loss of body condition
- Low cudging rates – at least 65% of your herd should be lying down 2-3 hours after milking
- Loose, bubbly stool
- Drops in butterfat or protein of 0.3% or more in one week

The potential loss in constituents, such as butter fats, resulting from a disruption to the rumen micro-organisms can be mitigated through good herd management and maintaining optimum nutrition. Here is some practical advice for managing this important period successfully.

### Monitor your forage

The moisture content of grass varies greatly throughout the spring, so check the levels of dry matter in your grass carefully so you can track dry matter intake (DMI). Aim to walk through your grazing platforms once a week to monitor grass levels.

Spring grass tends to have lower levels of fibre accompanied by excess sugar levels, which can compromise rumen function or even cause sub-acute rumen acidosis (SARA).

To counter the negative effects of lush, leafy spring grass, supplement your herd with highly digestible forages. Choose those with a high energy content like maize silage or high DMD grass silage (>28%). This helps drive DMI and maintain protein and milk constituent levels.

In addition to food and forage, fresh clean water should always be available to cows in the field. Make sure troughs are clean, free of debris and working properly.

### Balance diets with concentrate

Round out your cows' diet with a compound feed that complements your forage and fills any nutritional gaps your grass isn't supplying, paying particular attention to protein levels.

Rumen degradable proteins (RDPs) are readily available in spring grass as crude protein, particularly after applying fertiliser. If there is too much protein in the diet, it will be broken down into ammonia and result in high blood urea levels, impacting fertility and body condition. If the protein in your grass is too high, use a compound feed containing less protein.

One of Corby Rock Mill's most popular compound feeds at this time of year is Hi UFL 14% or 16% Summer Dairy Pellet.





### Don't just take our word for it...

David Brady milks 100 cows on a 40 hectare grazing platform near Stradone, Co. Cavan. David works hard on managing his pasture, measuring grass quality, soil sampling annually and re-seeding where necessary to reclaim suboptimal land. The Brady family has been working with Corby Rock for around 20 years. David commented, "We've tried switching products from time to time, but I find Corby Rock's dairy rations very good. At this time of year when the cows are being turned out, we're starting to use the 14% summer ration\* in the parlour."

\* Hi UFL 14% Dairy Pellet

#### Hi UFL 16% Dairy Pellet Spec 73

Contains high levels of maize to balance fresh grass

Can also provide more protein supplementation when grass growth is poor

Additional ingredients include:

Protein from quality sources, including soya bean meal

Digestible fibre from soya hulls

AcidBuf, a rumen buffer that improves feed efficiency, increases milk constituents, and prevents SARA and acidosis

Suitable for cows in all stages of lactation

#### Hi UFL 14% Dairy Pellet Spec 74

High energy feed to help balance lush, spring grass and optimise milk solids levels

Moderate levels of protein

High inclusion of cereals, like maize and wheat, and soya hulls as a good digestible fibre source

For more information on managing feed requirements through spring turnout, contact your local Corby Rock Mill representative.

