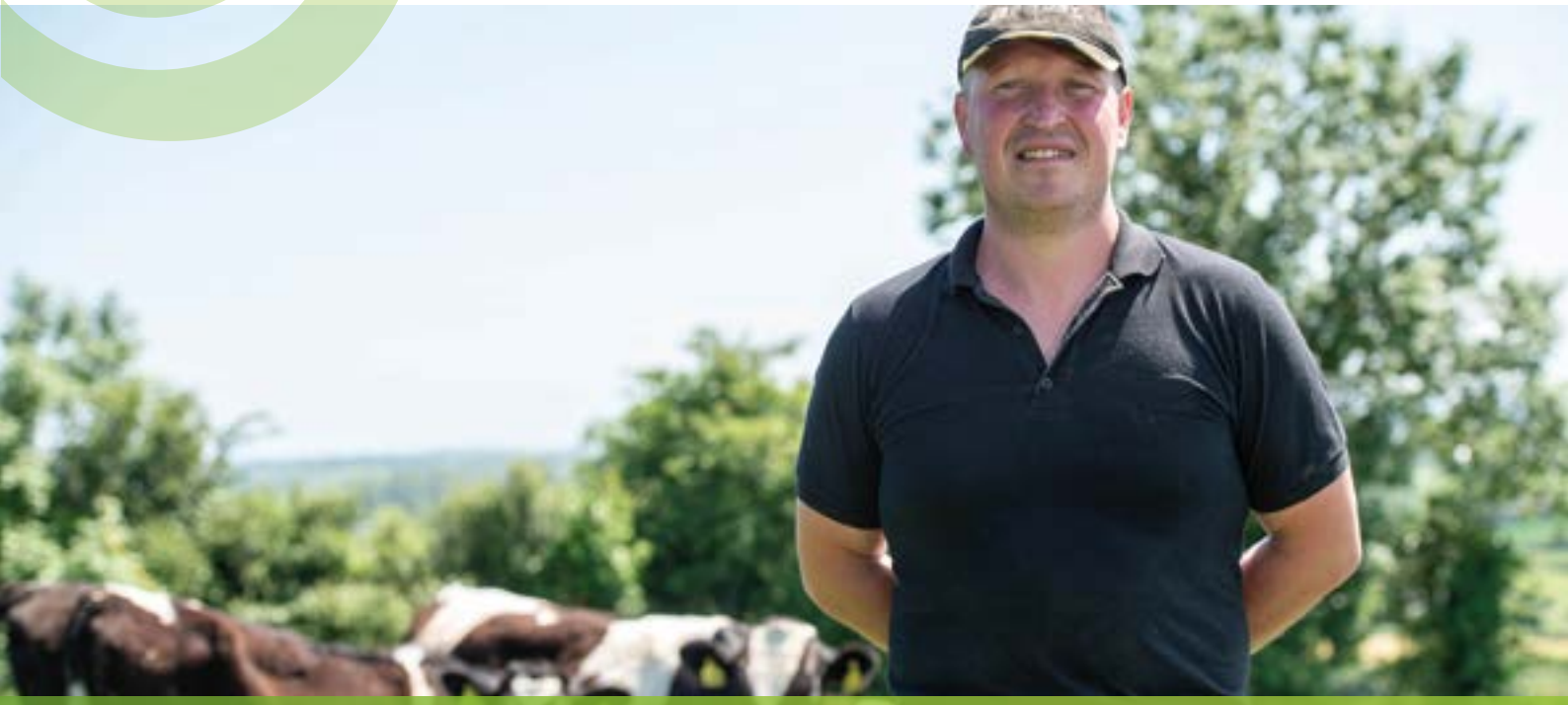
YEASTSOLUTIONS
ISSUE 33 - SPRING



ACTISAF IMPROVES RUMEN FUNCTION...

Transitioning dairy herds to grass in the spring means a change in dietary ingredients for cows, which can often impact rumen function whilst gut microbes adjust to the change in levels of nutrients.

Dairy farmer, Alan Byrne, keeps 84 Friesian cattle near Tullydrum, Co Louth, with the herd averaging 6,000 litres at 4.12 per cent butterfat and 3.6 per cent protein, primarily from grazing.

Alan aims to calve 60 per cent of his herd in a 12.5-week calving period in the spring, with the other 40 per cent calving from October over a period of eight weeks. All heifers go back into his milking herd and bull calves are sold on to be raised for beef.

In a normal year, he aims to get his cows out on the paddocks grazing by mid-February, keeping them on grass until early November. In the spring, cows are fed a compound feed while at grass (typically at around 4kg/cow/day) and are provided a TMR ration while housed indoors over the winter months, which is largely based on high-quality homegrown grass silage.

"In Spring 2017, I noticed that the cows were showing signs of discomfort, with loose and bubbly dung and drops in butterfat levels. I phoned my vet to come take a look to see what was going wrong," Alan explained.

Local veterinarian, Paddy McGinn, assessed the herd and diagnosed SARA as the cause of their decline.

"Alan is a very detail-oriented and proactive farmer, but his cows were not thriving as they should have been," said Paddy.

He suggested that Alan incorporate Actisaf live yeast into the cows' compound feed, supplied by Dooley's in Inniskeen. Alan remembers well how quickly he saw a change after the addition was made.

"Within seven days of including the Actisaf the dung had changed dramatically, with no bubbles and a much better consistency. The cows' condition also visibly improved, and they just seemed a lot more content and comfortable.

"Once we got into the grazing season, I reduced the feed rate of compound feed as I normally would to around 2kg/head/day and noticed that cows started to scour. I then realised that I'd inadvertently reduced the rate of Actisaf, as it was formulated for a 4kg feed rate. I put the feed rate back up temporarily, and the cows got better straight away, and maintained that until I had the next feed delivery, formulated correctly for a lower feed rate. My cows have been happy since!"

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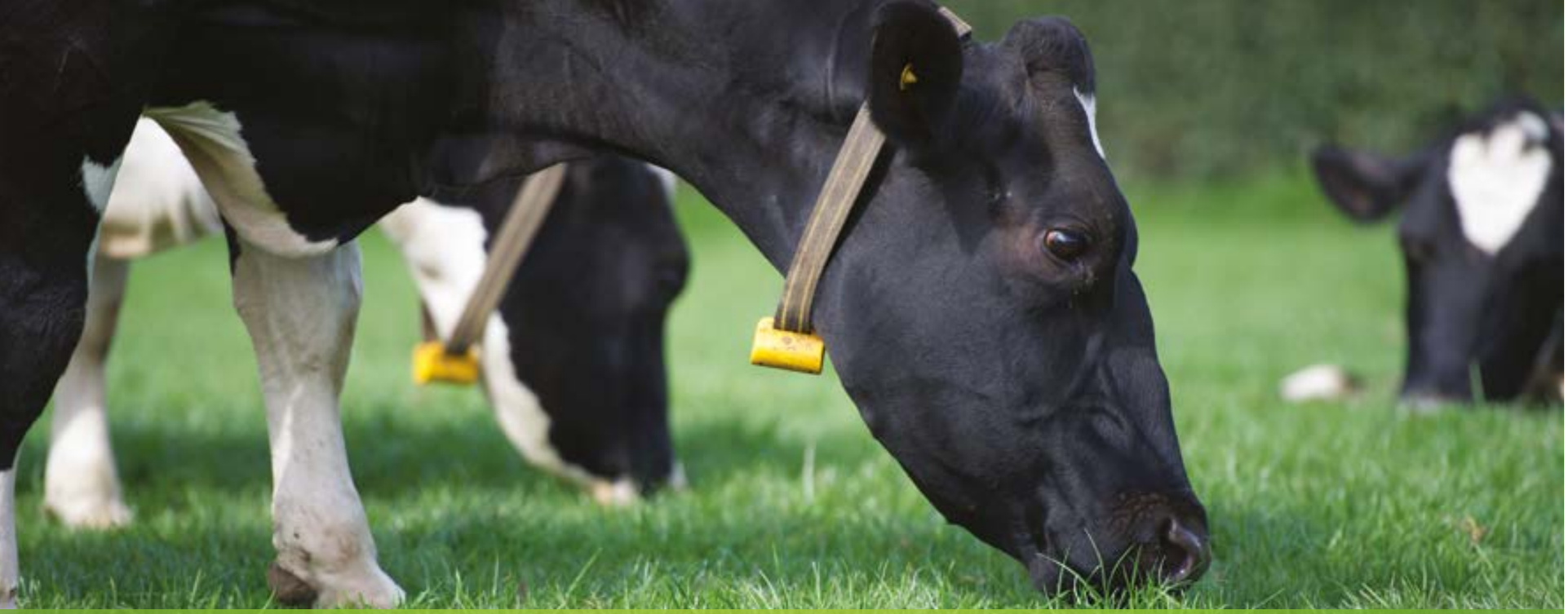


TOP TIPS FOR TURNOUT TO GRASS

Making the most of grazed grass is critical for any profitable dairy enterprise. With the generous spring weather so far this year, farmers will already have cows out grazing by day and will get them out full time as soon as grass supply and conditions allow. However, there are a few things farmers can do to ensure that their herd's health and performance are maintained during this time.

James Ambrose, Technical Manager UK & Ireland for Phileo Lesaffre Animal Care, provides some advice below for managing the transition period and offers tips for how to successfully transition your herd onto grass this year.

Gradual turnout

It takes around three weeks for the bugs in the rumen to adapt to diet change, so it is important to manage the transition to grazing gradually in order to avoid digestive upsets and loss of performance. Cows should be able to consume 5kg DM in approximately 3 hours in suitable swards and weather conditions.

Dry matter intakes

The moisture content of grass can vary significantly in spring, and this can have a major impact on dry matter intakes. At 15% DM, a cow estimated to consume 15kg of grass dry matter needs to eat 100kg of fresh grass!

Excess crude protein

Lush, leafy spring grass can often have a crude protein content in excess of 250g/kg DM, particularly after fertiliser application, and this is mainly rumen degradable protein (RDP). Excessive CP in the diet will result in elevated blood urea nitrogen levels (BUN), potentially causing loss of body condition, reduced fertility, and declines in hoof health.

Buffer feeding

It is important to supplement cows with forages with a high energy content and digestibility to maximise dry matter intake during the transition to grass. Starch-based forages, such as maize silage, are a great combination with grass, as the use of nitrogen in the rumen is enhanced and microbial protein synthesis is increased due to the fermentable energy being supplied by the maize starch. High DMD grass silage (>28% DM) is also highly effective.

Highly digestible grass swards can challenge rumen function - Lush spring grass tends to have a high proportion of leaf to stem, resulting in low structural fibre levels in the overall diet. This can impact on cudding rates and saliva production, further compromising rumen function, and high proportions of sugar and low structural fibre can additionally challenge the rumen, leading to sub-acute rumen acidosis (SARA).

Compound feeding

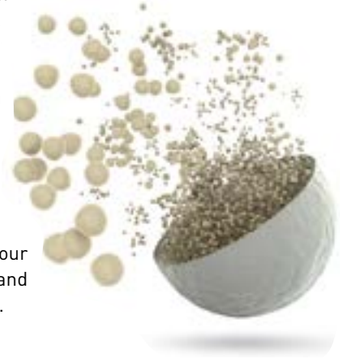
Ensure that compound feed, fed through the parlour, complements the nutrient content in your grass. Aim for a feed that has around 14-16% crude protein, a highly digestible fibre content (such as sugar beet pulp and soya hulls), a balanced source of cereals including maize and barley and a source of bypass protein. It should also contain trace elements and minerals that grass is deficient in.

Milk quality

Monitor bulk tank milk collections for average yields and constituents. A fall in butterfat or protein of 0.3% or greater in one week is a warning sign for poor rumen function and the occurrence of SARA.

Feed Actisaf live yeast – Adding Actisaf live yeast to your cows' ration will reduce setbacks in performance at turnout by helping the rumen bugs adjust to grazed grass faster and more effectively, thereby improving rumen function. Actisaf also reduces the risk of SARA, both at turnout and throughout the grazing period. It should be included at a recommended rate of 1kg/tonne of grazing compound, assuming a feed rate of 6 - 8kg compound/cow/day in early lactation.

Taking a proactive approach to grazing transition management can mean substantial differences in revenue for your business. Small reductions in yield or milk constituents brought on by challenged rumen function, even in small dairy herds, can result in a substantial loss of income. By taking the above steps and adding Actisaf to your ration, you can protect your herd's performance, and consequently, your business.



BUSINESS UPDATE

Meet the newest member of the Phileo UK & Ireland team – Zoe McKay

Phileo UK & Ireland is pleased to introduce the newest member of their technical support team. Zoe McKay, of Co. Laois, joins Phileo as a Technical Specialist and will be providing on-farm support in nutrition and management related to our full range of products.

Zoe spent much of her childhood around sheep and suckler herds before attending University College Dublin (UCD), where she studied Agriculture and Animal Science. There she developed an interest in animal nutrition and has recently submitted her Ph.D. thesis titled "Nutritional strategies to influence milk production, composition, processability and nitrogen excretion of lactating dairy cows".

"As part of my research, I investigated the use of different supplementation and diet types in late and early-lactation, and how those strategies impacted milk production, particularly milk composition and its suitability for processing," she explained.

In addition to her academic achievements, she also has experience on beef, sheep and dairy farms, as well as working with drystock advisors at Teagasc. Zoe also has experience working with horses and the area of equine nutrition is one she hopes to develop in time.

From growing up in a farming community and through her studies, Zoe has gained invaluable experience across multiple agricultural sectors with specific interest in ruminant production systems. She is also a member of the Agricultural Science Association and the Irish Grassland Association and is ambitious to further develop her technical and research skills as she progresses through her career in agriculture.

"I am looking forward to working on the practical, hands-on side of ruminant nutrition," she said. "There is so much scope for me to learn, as well as apply my research background, as I help to support Phileo's customers and farmers. It is also a good opportunity to bring my work full circle as I move into the production side of the industry!"

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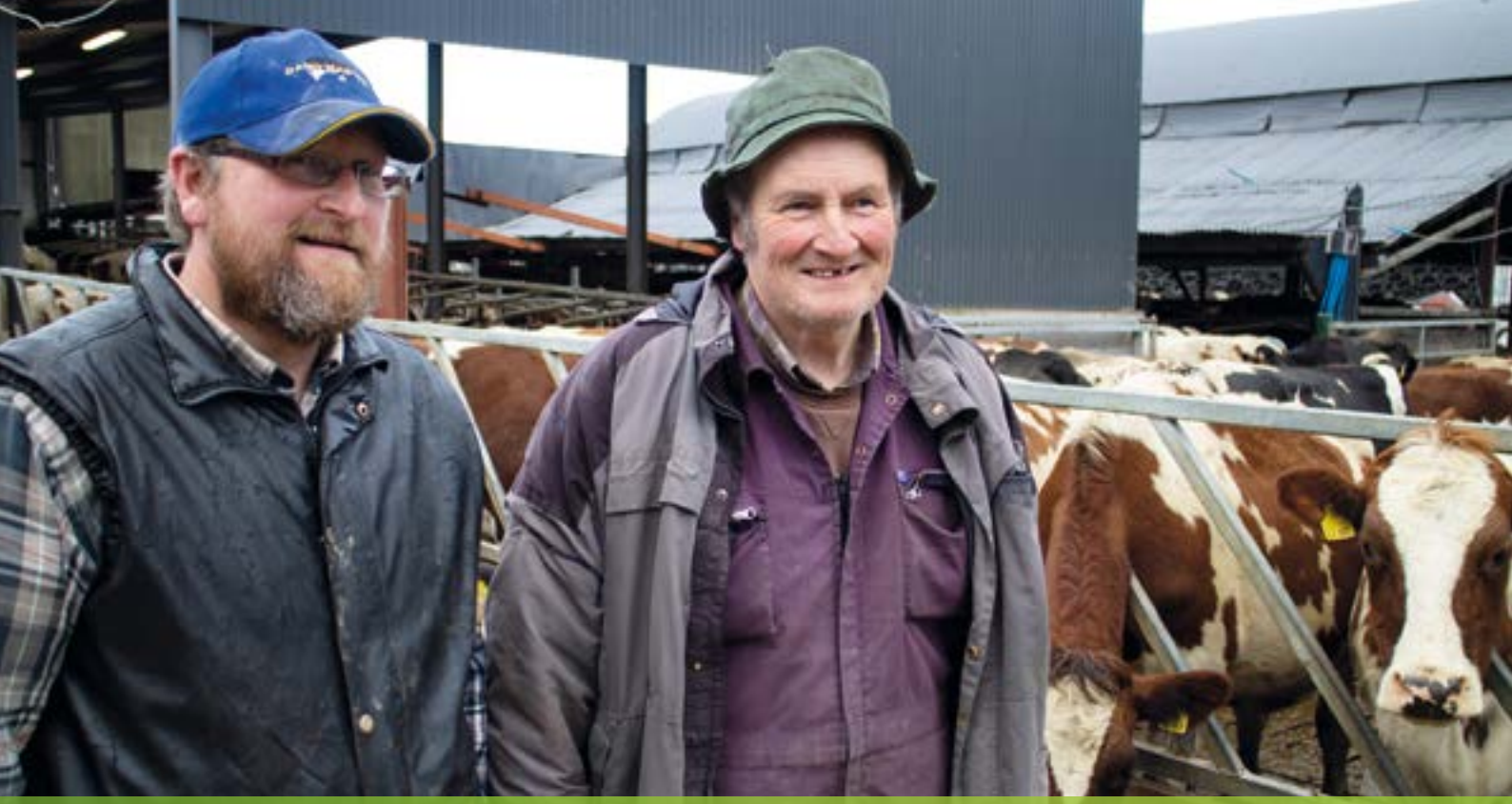

SUCCESSFUL USE OF ACTISAF AND SAFMANNAN IN A ZERO-GRAZING SYSTEM

Colin Murphy, farms together with parents Brian & Mary, near Knockbridge, Dundalk and currently milks 350 cows on their 400-acre farm.

Their farming system makes the most of the 150-acre grazing platform and uses zero grazing to allow grass to be fed to the cows for as long as the season allows. The spring-calving herd of Rotbunt (MRI) cows average around 6,000 litres per cow per year and are currently averaging 5% butterfat and 4% protein.

Apart from one employee, the family undertake all the farm work themselves, however, Colin has improved efficiency even further by mechanising the milking routine, moving from a 26-point parlour to a series of five DeLaval robots.

There was a time just a few years ago, however, when the business wasn't in quite such a positive place, as Colin explained: "We were experiencing a combination of health problems in the herd leading to high levels of mastitis, plus problems with cows after calving. We just weren't in a good place."

"We asked Gareth Gibson from Phileo Lesaffre Animal Care to come and take a look at the cows and he recommended adding Actisaf and Safmannan into both the dry cow diet and the dairy feed, to aid rumen function and fibre digestion and support immune status and overall performance. Our feed supplier, Dooleys Agri, included these products in our compound feed and into the dry cow diet."

At the same time, the family moved from once a day feeding to ad lib feed and concentrated on preparing the rumen for rising intakes at calving.

"The results were apparent in just a few days, and really just turned around the health issues we were dealing with," Colin explained. "Dung consistency improved, mastitis levels dropped from 1 per day to 1 per week and the cows seemed much more content. We were delighted!"

"We now include Actisaf and Safmannan in feed across the farm from calf feed to dry cow and dairy cows and won't be taking it out in a hurry," concludes Colin. "We are happy in the knowledge that it's in there and the cows are responding well. Problems like these really need to be shared - farmers aren't great at communicating their issues but often a lot of people are battling the same problems so we need to talk about things more. Discussion groups often focus on growing grass, but there's at least five months of the year when we need to feed something else and how to do that doesn't always get discussed!"

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