

FOCUS ON DRY MATTER INTAKES THIS WINTER

Maximising dry matter intakes and rumen efficiency are two of the key drivers of cost-effective beef production across rearing, growing and finishing cattle. Georgina Chapman from molasses blend specialists ED&F Man explains.

To optimise growth rates and reduce days to slaughter it is vital to achieve target energy and protein supply, and to do this cost-effectively you need to ensure cattle at all stages are achieving high dry matter intakes. If cattle are eating more it is possible to make more use of home-grown forages and reduce purchased feeds, so making production more cost effective.

Get silage analysed

To optimise dry matter intakes it is important to balance the ration, to ensure good rumen health and the starting point is to have regular forage analyses over the winter.

Grass silage can be particularly variable which can affect intakes. It is important to know the analysis so that the correct purchased feeds are used at the optimum rates. For example, low dry matter silage can be more acidic and less palatable. This can reduce intakes and also negatively impact rumen health.

Poorly fermented silages can also be less palatable which will compromise intakes while high NDF content is another factor reducing how much cattle will eat.

This year in particular it will be crucial to get grass silage analysed monthly so that you can account for variations and balance the diet.

When balancing forages, starch from cereals and maize can be a key ingredient in finishing rations, helping increase energy density. However, too much starch can affect rumen health as it is rapidly digested by the rumen micro-organisms and increases the production of lactic acid. This increases the risk of acidosis and sub-acute ruminal acidosis (SARA).

Animals suffering from SARA show a decrease in feed intakes and efficiency as the rumen wall becomes damaged

by the low rumen pH. This reduces the animal's ability to absorb nutrients.

Research has shown that by replacing a proportion of starch with sugar via a molasses based liquid feed will help to reduce the starch 'overload', improve palatability, intake and digestibility and encourage a healthier rumen, promoting better performance.

Trial results found an average daily gain increase of 0.1kg/day in finishing cattle fed 1kg/head/day of a high sugar molasses blend in place of 0.7kg maize meal. In addition, the amount of time the rumen spent in acidotic conditions was reduced by over 80%.

Better fibre digestion

Sugars provide valuable fermentable carbohydrates in the form of six-carbon sugars to fuel the rumen micro-organisms, which will encourage better fibre digestion without upsetting rumen health. When lignin and NDF levels are high, the energy in fibre is more difficult to extract and sugars have been found to help by providing the additional fuel needed by the rumen micro-organisms to access this energy. Farm trials have found that by adding a molasses based liquid feed to a ration, fibre digestion can be increased on average by 17%.

Molasses can also help improve palatability which could be important this year, particularly with big bale silage.

Heating, which is common with big bales can lead to reduced palatability, feed spoilage and suppressed intakes.

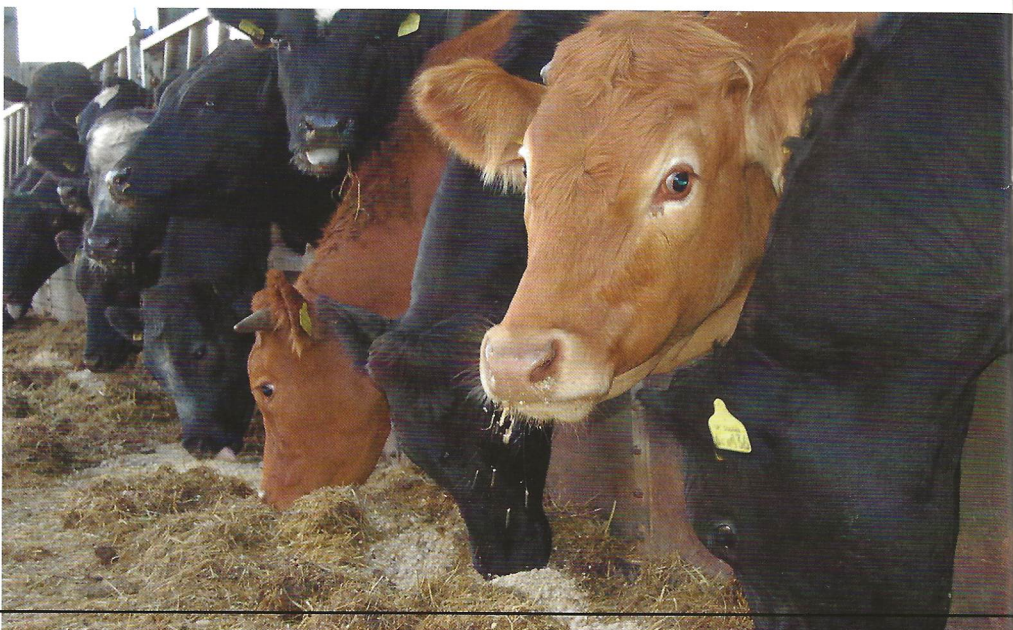
Heating occurs when silage is exposed to the air which allows undesirable bacteria to grow causing spoilage and a reduction in the nutrient content of the silage. In addition, the spoilage creates strong odours which makes the forage less attractive leading to reduced intakes.

Reduce spoilage

In addition, baled silage is often higher in long fibre and dry matter which can cause intake issues and increase the risk of aerobic spoilage. To improve performance on big bale silage and reduce the risk of spoilage consider using FreshGuard.

FreshGuard is a ration conditioner that suppresses the actions of undesirable bacteria and by so doing can improve palatability, intakes and performance. It can be added to any bulk ED&F Man molasses based liquid feed.

Regular silage analysis to ensure you know the quality of forages combined with accurate supplementation to optimise intakes and rumen health will help ensure cattle at all stages can grow to their potential cost-effectively this winter.



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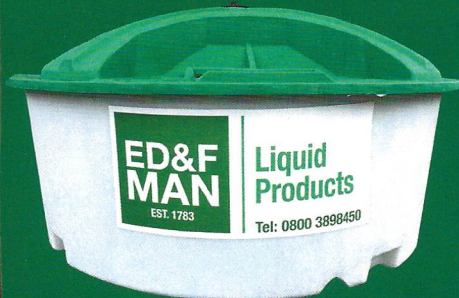
Molasses Blends

The Essential Ingredient



**RESEARCH
PROVEN**

Increase feed efficiency to **improve margins**



- Molasses based liquid feeds increase palatability, digestibility and intakes making it the ideal complimentary feed
- Increasing fibre digestibility helps extract more nutritional value from forages
- Variable quality silages are prone to heating this winter, add **Fresh-Guard** to your liquid feed to prevent heating and spoilage
- Many of our products are available in load sizes from 1 to 28mt
- ED&F Man offer a range of lick feeder and storage options

Want to know more?

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