

Challenging conventional thinking on cow rations will be essential to meet economic and environmental pressures. In a series of three articles, we highlight ways to improve feeding precision.

- 1 Increasing rationing precision to boost productivity and sustainability
- 2 **Driving forage intakes and reducing waste**
- 3 Boosting rumen efficiency to improve nutrient use and reduce emissions



Make smooth switch to winter rations

We offer some practical tips and pointers on balancing this year's 'challenging' silages, particularly when it comes to supporting rumen function and driving intakes.

TEXT PHIL EADES

As cows begin the transition to full winter rations, it's vital to quickly get them settled to optimise dry matter intakes and minimise waste.

"Achieving high and consistent dry matter intakes is key to this," stresses ED&F Man's Georgina Chapman. "If cows fail to eat enough then this will restrict nutrient intakes, leading to poorer yields and milk composition and a risk of compromised fertility and health.

"This year's higher fibre and generally lower digestibility grass silages suggest it will be more difficult to drive intakes, making it even more important to pay attention to detail when feeding cows to give them the best opportunity to eat as much as possible," she says.

"However, early results show a significant range in silage analysis, making regular analysis essential to understand the challenges that are to be overcome to achieve higher intakes. Then it's about ensuring the

rumen can digest the diet and extract the nutrients that can then be utilised."

Ms Chapman adds that a number of management factors will influence how much cows will eat and how well they will use the diet.

"To help encourage higher intakes producers should focus on minimising clamp contamination and waste. Never feed spoiled silage, and use a block cutter or shear ►



Georgina Chapman:
"Consider adding a conditioner to reduce heating"