Synergy Farm Health Client Forage Competition

The very long dry, hot summer led to ewes sharply weaned, sucklers buffer fed and dairy cows brought in. Therefore, many are thinking early about "winter forage" this year.

TeamSheep has been doing an increasing number of sheep feeding plans based on forage analysis over the last few years. Forage analysis has enabled rationalisation of concentrates bought and fed (in some instances reducing costs) and early identification of gaps.

The same principles are applied to beef suckler nutrition with TeamBeef receiving an increasing number of requests.

Our aims:

- **maximise** ewe and cow health
- **maximise** lamb and calf vitality at delivery
- **optimise** colostrum production and neonate thrift and can be done in advance of Spring

To promote discussions about forage quality, targeted feed usage and cost control Teams Sheep and Beef are running a **Client Forage Competition**

There will be four classes:

a.) Beef suckler silage
b.) Beef suckler hay/haylage
c.) Sheep silage
d.) Sheep hay/haylage

The rules:

1. Forage must be 2022 made
2. Forage can only be entered into one class which should reflect how you will use it

To enter:

You can either submit pre-done analysis (for example already analysed through your feed merchant) or submit a sample through our lab. Samples need to be submitted to our lab by **28th October** for analysis or paper copies sent to us by this date. **The entry form is below and is available on our website.**

Samples will be assessed by our in-house Nutrition Vet Sam Cottam (for anonymous judging). Prizes will be awarded for the winning samples in each class.

Four Prizes up for grabs each worth £120

Category winners will receive a 20 minute pre-lambing/calving visit to take metabolic bloods in advance of lambing/calving - to include 10 BHBs of either cows or ewes.

Additional testing can be performed in accordance with your vet at your cost.

Grass silage analysis:
£13.54 excl VAT

Hay/Haylage analysis:
£18.66 excl VAT

Dietary minerals and iodine:
£44.27 excl VAT

Turnaround time of forage analysis is within 3-4 days of arriving with the external lab. Mineral analysis results typically available within 9 days

Note: All submissions will come back with comments from your routine veterinary surgeon about overall quality and feed value. Further work may need to be done to prepare precise diets. For comprehensive diet preparation, mineral analysis is also recommended, however, this will not be assessed in the competition.

A WORD FROM JUDGE SAM COTTAM

"Quality forages are the backbone of profitable rationing for any ruminant enterprise, and an area for improvement on many sheep and beef farms.

So what are we looking for? Well aside from the main headline values of Metabolizable Energy (ME) and Protein values, we will be considering intake and palatability factors including pH and fermentation profiles (for silages), sugars and fibre levels."

We will be hosting meetings in November to announce the results and discuss planning ahead for Spring feeding of expectant mums.

We look forward to receiving your entries.

BEEF AND SHEEP FORAGE COMPETITION ENTRY FORM

Client name: _____ **Routine vet:** _____

Address: _____ **Postcode** _____

Email address: _____ **Date sampled:** _____

Sample description i.e. type of silage/hay/haylage: _____

Month/Year cut: _____

Please submit samples (paper or fresh samples) FAO the Synergy Laboratory based at Rampisham where they will be processed and collated. Samples can be dropped off at any Synergy Farm Health Base, please contact Reception who can advise.

Please tick which apply below:

1. **Attached is:** **Forage for analysis** ☐ **Pre-done forage analysis (on paper)** ☐
2. **Which one of the following classes within the competition is this sample for:**
   Beef suckler- silage ☐ **Breeding ewe- silage** ☐
   Beef suckler- hay/haylage ☐ **Breeding ewe- hay/haylage** ☐

Sciantec part of Cawood

T&Cs apply- please see above for more information

For office use only: Results sent to vet (for forage analysis via Sciantec only) ☐ Forage result submitted for competition ☐

HOW TO TAKE A GOOD FORAGE SAMPLE

Many of our farmers are finding it useful to have their forage analysed before the winter period (be it hay or silage), to better plan a winter ration for their sheep, cattle or youngstock. We are all aware that forage quality and composition can vary dramatically year on year, as well as between fields and cuts. Knowing the quality of your forage has two benefits:

- Ensuring cattle, sheep or youngstock are getting the nutrients they need (energy and protein, as well as minerals and trace element) for the stage of the production cycle they are in.
- Ensuring farmers are purchasing only additional feed that is required and therefore being as economically efficient as possible!

Taking a forage sample is a quick and easy process, but as with taking any sample, it is important the correct procedure is followed to get the most accurate results. (For information on sampling other feedstuffs, please speak to one of our vets who can contact the testing laboratory for specific guidance).

The tools you will need for taking a sample are:-

- Bucket / plastic sheet for mixing the sample
- Plastic, sealable sampling bags
- Marker pen
- Sampling tool such as a corer (for clamp silage)

Baled hay/haylage or silage

Take a sample from three or more bales – these should be bulked together and well mixed. From this mix remove 0.5Kg and place in a plastic bag (plastic freezer bags or large sandwich bags work well) with the air removed. Please ensure you label the sample.

If you have bales from different cuts or distinctly different leys (e.g. herbal leys Vs ryegrass), take separate samples from each. This means more information can be utilised in your ration plan.

Clamp silage

To assess the face (i.e. what the cows are eating now) take five samples in a 'W' shape from the clamp face. Core samples should be taken from a minimum of three sites within the clamp, ensuring the corer reaches the bottom of the silo. Silage sampling should not be carried out within 6 weeks of sealing the clamp, as it is important to wait for stable fermentation to occur.

NB:-

- Do not sample mouldy or damaged areas of a bale or clamp
- Store sample in a fridge before sending to the laboratory ASAP– do not freeze

We are able to provide forage analysis for our clients at a very reasonable cost – please talk to your vet. There is a basic option for energy and protein analysis and then a more in-depth analysis if you want to look at trace elements etc. We strongly recommend getting forage analysed (for prices please see page 9) as early as practical and our vets would be very happy to discuss your winter ration planning with you.

See website or ask your routine vet for more details of our Client Forage Competition.

Louise Silk
Veterinary Surgeon

JOINT TEAM SHEEP AND TEAM BEEF MEETINGS
ALL 7PM START

Planning ahead for Spring feeding of expectant mums and results of the forage competition (entries deadline 28/10)

10TH NOVEMBER
The Hunters Lodge,
Axminster

22ND NOVEMBER
Brewers Arms,
South Petherton

23RD NOVEMBER
Salisbury
Livestock Market

24TH NOVEMBER
The Royal Oak,
Bere Regis

For full details and to book
please visit the Training and Events section of our website
www.SynergyFarmHealth.com