Dairy Australia

FEED PLANNING

Closing your feed gap

All situations are different when it comes to filling the gap between the feed you have and the feed you need. You have options, but they come with a price – time, money or future potential.

KEY MESSAGES

- Home grown pasture or crops are likely to be of higher quality and lower cost than purchased feed, so they should be fully explored first.
- Feeding more grain/concentrates is an option, but this may increase your risk of acidosis.
- High fibre by-products can be purchased to extend your fodder reserves. They are not a substitute for grain/concentrate.
- Drying off early and culling cows can reduce the demand on feed but consider the future impact on your farm business's financial position in the short and longer term.

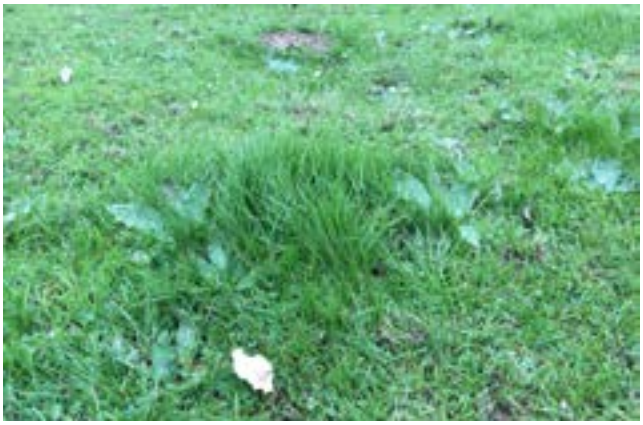
Does the paddock look like this?

Think about sowing a crop even if it is just to provide short-term feed. Don't forget to soil test and apply fertiliser if needed. Home-grown feed is likely to be the cheaper alternative.

Plant aggressively and take a chance after each rain event. Once it's wet, plant the rest.

Does the paddock look like this?

Manage pasture wisely. Until early spring at least, quantity is more limiting than quality. Set your rotation to graze paddocks at 2½–3 leaves or before canopy closure for ryegrass. Don't let the cows chew to less than five centimetres between the clumps. This may mean putting up a back fence.



Should you reduce stock numbers?

Some farmers may consider to reduce stock numbers earlier this season. Explore opportunities to agist dry cows and young stock. Check that there aren't any health issues to contend with.

Too many mouths to feed?

Culling cows can be a difficult task. Keep in mind the impact on your business next season and beyond. Empty cows should be the first to go, followed by low producers. Look at 'Making herd culling decisions' factsheet to design a herd management strategy that suits your farm. **feed.dairyaustralia.com.au/animal-health-and-welfare/making-herd-culling-decisions**

Put off by high urea costs?

It's likely that even urea priced at greater than $600/tonne will be a cheaper source of quality dry matter than purchased supplements. For example: At $600/tonne, and assuming a low response of 5 kg DM/kg Nitrogen, and utilisation of 75 per cent, the cost per tonne of DM is $350/t feed cost is 27 cents/kg DM.

The potential response of pasture to Nitrogen fertiliser should always be compared to the cost of buying the same feed.

What application rate are you using?
Can you apply more?
What intervals are you using between applications?
Seek advice.

Are high-fibre by-products an option?

High fibre by-products like palm kernel extract (PKE) meal can help make your current fodder supply last longer.

While moderately digestible, PKE is low in effective fibre and may increase your risk of acidosis.

Drying off early?

Dry cows require more feed than you may think (e.g. a 550 kg cow in her last month of pregnancy requires about 10 kg dry matter per day). Energy is needed to maintain their condition, grow a calf and repair an udder.

Think about feeding grain/concentrate to your dry cows – even in the bail between milkings if convenient.

Think it's a bit risky?Talk it over with an adviser.

Can you feed more grain/concentrate safely?

Grain/concentrate are the cheapest source of feed energy and are easy to buy.The ruminal acidosis risk assessment grid found at **feed.dairyaustralia.com.au** can help you decide what feeding rate of grain/concentrate you can be comfortable with.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Please visit **feed.dairyaustralia.com.au**

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