



# UM FARM NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2019

Welcome to the April 2019 edition of the UM farm newsletter, in this issue Victoria Phillips looks at how molasses can help combat some of the challenges of grazing on early spring grass.

## Molasses can help combat the double edged 'sward' of early spring grass!

By Victoria Phillips, Apheya Animal Nutrition Ltd

An unseasonably warm February after a year of drought and forage shortages was undoubtedly good news for farmers eyeing the last of their 2018 forage stocks with trepidation. The early turnout and relatively dry ground meant many farmers could breathe a sigh of relief that their forage had lasted the winter.

Early spring grass is a double edged 'sward' – On one hand, its high protein content and fast growth provides important nutrients, but fast growth means high moisture and high nitrogen, where sugars become the restrictive nutrient. Whilst spring grass is high in sugars relative to other times of year, there can still be a deficiency in relation to protein content, which leads to excess degradable protein in the diet, and high blood ammonia levels, which can ultimately affect reproductive performance.



Continued overleaf...



### Molasses Market in brief

- Cane FOB market continues to trade at high levels
- £ to \$ Fx rates not easing UK price levels
- Increase in feed demand for molasses in USA
- Less exports from Central Americas into Europe
- More imports from India into Europe
- High freight rates due to low vessel availability



## Molasses can help combat the double edged 'sward' of early spring grass! Continued...

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That first flush of grass was 2 months ago, 2-3 weeks earlier than usual, which means that April's grass will have lower nutrient content than previous years. Some farmers were making silage in March with that grass, before the recent frost slowed the growth again so the sugar content will be more variable than ever. Sugars are used by plants at night for respiration – so forage growing through the longer days of winter can have relatively lower sugar content. It follows that silage made early in the year can also have lower sugar content.

In order to counteract the variable sugar content of grass and silage, molasses can be used to make up for the shortfall, and the lower sugar content of winter growth. It can be used as a cost-effective sugar supplement to balance the high nitrogen content of early spring grass. Feeding 1-2kg per head per day alongside spring grass will allow maximum utilisation of nitrogen, maximising fibre breakdown without the high ammonia problems associated with spring grass.

<https://hayandforage.com/article-1257-when-is-spring-pasture-too-good-.html>  
<https://aces.illinois.edu/news/lush-green-grass-presents-nutritional-challenges-cattle>

## Straw and Molasses work well together, just make sure there is enough protein present!

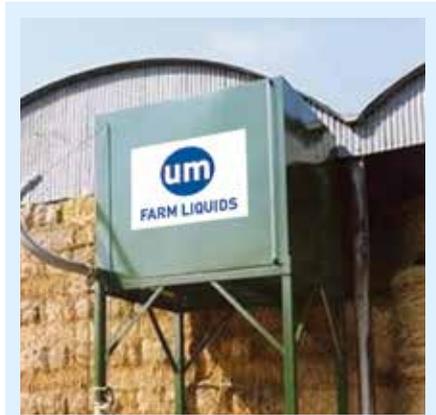
For suckler cows, the forage shortages have meant that some diets have been high in straw, where supplementation with sufficient protein and energy is essential. As noted in a recent article on the Farmers Weekly web-site, more deaths from straw impaction have been seen this year – this occurs when the diet contains insufficient nitrogen and energy to feed the rumen micro-organisms, and they are unable to break down the fibre in the straw. As a rule a diet with a minimum protein content of 9% should be maintained for suckler cows.

The following diet:- 30kg typical suckler silage, 5kg straw and a mineral supplement - provides a diet which has only 6.4% protein, which is severely deficient to meet the requirements of a suckler cow nearing the end of gestation.

Supplementation is best given in the form of a urea/molasses blend, providing replacement degradable protein and a consistent supply of sugars.

**Adding 1.5kg Hi-Pro soya to the diet will increase the protein to 9% - however a proportion of this protein is undegradable to the rumen micro-organisms, and therefore isn't doing the job of rumen protein supplementation.**

Urea is the best form of protein supplementation in these instances and can be easily added to the diet in a molasses blend, the key is to just ensure the diet contains at least 9% crude protein in the diet dry matter.



### MOLASSES TANK SCHEME

The United Molasses tank scheme can help in the purchase of a new tank by offering a flexible mode of payment with no interest to pay for up to 36 months!

- **No lump sum payment so the cost is spread**
- **No interest to pay**
- **Safe and easy way to handle bulk liquids on farm**
- **Solves potential farm storage issues**

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