

Ireland's Dairy & Beef Nutrition Bulletin



Issue 01 | March 2024

Expert animal feed advice and updates from Specialist Nutrition to maximise performance on Irish farms



Power Your Farm's Performance with Expert Support in Feed Solutions

Welcome to the first edition of 'Ireland's Dairy & Beef Nutrition Bulletin' which is packed with expert tips, guidance and product information from the experts at Specialist Nutrition.

The team has designed this regular bulletin to provide you with the best advice on a wide range of nutritional topics to help drive your farm's performance and profitability.

Our expert farm nutritionists will deliver tips on everything from grazed grass and silage, to moist or liquid feeds, the addition of the right minerals for the job, buffer feeding solutions, safe forage storage, optimal animal environments, and much more.

In this first edition, the focus is on seasonal topics for the post-calving and early Spring period in the dairy sector. This includes managing butterfat levels at grass and comprehensive guidance on buffer

feeding strategies to get the most from your herd.

Specialist Nutrition is Ireland's leading provider of alternative and sustainable feed sources, performance supplements and nutritional expertise for healthy and thriving beef, dairy and pig herds.

If you would like to speak with one of our nutritionists or request a farm visit, call us on + 353 (0) 51 833071.

Request a farm visit from our beef and dairy nutrition experts today.

How Bill Donovan saved pitting time and labour while boosting silage conservation

Client: Bill Donovan, Dairy Farmer, Breansha, Co Tipperary.

Introduction:

Bill Donovan, a progressive farmer striving for improved silage conservation on his 200-head dairy farm in Co Tipperary, turned to Specialist Nutrition looking for expert advice on the subject. With guidance from his Specialist Nutrition Technical Consultant Nigel Condell, Bill incorporated a Silostop Oxygen Barrier Film and a Silostop Anti-UV

Cover into his silage preservation strategy. This resulted in remarkable improvements not only in silage conservation and waste reduction, but also in labour efficiency, time saving, and overall forage quality over extended periods. In fact, Donovan's farm required only half the work and half the time for pitting thanks to the introduction of Silostop.



Product Overview: Silostop Orange Oxygen Barrier Silage Film

- Thin, lightweight, and robust oxygen barrier film.
- Advanced 9-layer technology reduces DM losses in the upper layer.
- Eliminates waste on the surface and shoulders, ensuring better feed stability.
- Available in various sizes to fit all clamps.
- Fully recyclable.
- Its combination with re-usable anti-UV silage covers, contributes to decreased plastic usage for improved sustainability.
- Fully recyclable, aligning with environmental sustainability goals.

Product Overview: Silostop Anti-UV Cover

- 210 gsm twill weave polypropylene provides 100% shading from UV rays.
- Protects Silostop Orange film from degrading sunlight and environmental damage.
- Safeguards your Silostop Orange film from birds and other wildlife.
- Reusable with a long lifespan in all environments.
- Combined with Silostop Orange, the system generates up to 60% less plastic waste than conventional covering systems.
- Anti-UV Covers can be rolled and stored when not in use.

Key Benefits Facilitated by Specialist Nutrition:

1. Tailored Recommendations:

- Bill wanted to maintain high quality in his silage and extend its shelf life while minimising wastage.
- Specialist Nutrition's recommended a Silostop solution, tailored to Bill's specific silage management needs.

2. Implementation Assistance:

- Specialist Nutrition provided hands-on support in implementing the Silostop solutions, ensuring optimal usage and efficiency.

3. Training and Guidance:

- Bill received comprehensive training and guidance from Specialist Nutrition, empowering him to seamlessly integrate the film and UV cover into his silage management routine.

4. Economic Benefits and Increased Efficiency:

Bill experienced a 50% reduction in labour and a 50% reduction in time needed for the pitting process. He also reduced his fermentation losses by almost 50%.

- Reduction in forage wastage resulted in economic benefits for Bill, contributing to improved farm profitability.

Conclusion:

The success story of Bill Donovan exemplifies the power of collaboration between forward-thinking farmers and agricultural specialists. Specialist Nutrition's strategic recommendation of Silostop solutions and hands-on support, led to tangible improvements in labour efficiency, time manage-

ment, and economic outcomes for Bill. This case study highlights the value of a holistic approach to silage management, combining innovative products with expert guidance for optimal results.

At Specialist Nutrition, we're committed to empowering farmers with knowledge about

the benefits of products like Silostop® Oxygen Barrier Films. For expert advice and strategies to optimise your silage management, connect with our team.

For more information on Specialist Nutrition's Silostop range, please call + 353 (0) 51 833071.

How to Manage Milk Butterfat Levels at Grass

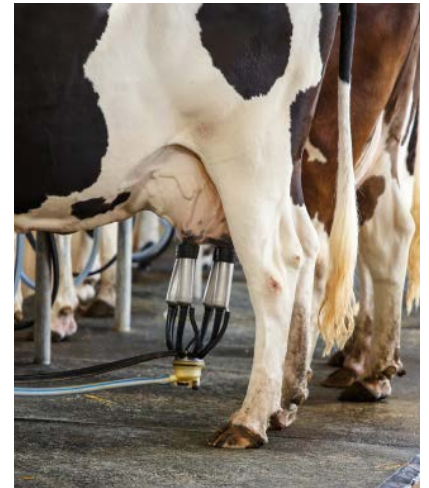
In spring, many dairy farms eagerly transition their cows to graze, embracing the seasonal shift to a grass-based diet. However, this change comes with a challenge – the potential for fluctuating rumen pH, which can adversely impact butterfat levels.

A common occurrence during the spring-summer period is a noticeable drop of up to 0.5% in butterfat among grazing dairy cows. Interestingly, this decline often transpires without overt signs of acidosis or lameness, yet it carries financial consequences due to penalties associated with low butterfat levels.

As cows begin to calve and are looking at being turned out to grass, milk quality, particularly butterfat can be hard to maintain. In fact, maintaining milk butterfat levels through

the spring and summer grazing season is an annual challenge for dairy units across Ireland.

To address this recurring challenge, Specialist Nutrition experts advocate a holistic approach, combining effective management practices and strategic nutritional interventions. In the following sections, we delve into the critical aspects of buffer feeding, grazing considerations, and the pivotal role of rumen buffering additives in sustaining butterfat excellence.



Request a farm visit from our beef and dairy nutrition experts today.

The Significance of Buffer Feeding

To counteract the challenges associated with spring grazing, including low butterfat levels, strategic buffer feeding becomes imperative. Buffer feeding is essential in the strategic management of a dairy herd, playing a pivotal role in maintaining overall health and elevating milk quality. The significance of buffer feeding lies in its ability to counterbalance variations in the nutrient composition of available forages, ensuring a consistent and well-rounded diet for dairy cows. By providing additional nutrients during periods of nutritional imbalance, buffer feeding not only supports optimal milk production but also safeguards against milk fat depression, making it an essential component of a comprehensive dairy management strategy.

Furthermore, the key to successful buffer feeding lies not only in the choice of additives but also in their strategic integration into the overall feeding regimen. Dairy farmers are adopting innovative approaches to seamlessly incorporate buffer feeding into their daily practices, ensuring sustained butterfat levels and overall herd health.

Strategic Grazing Techniques: A Systematic Approach

Many dairy herds are impacted by milk-fat depression at turnout and through the early grazing season. Drops of 0.5% in milk fat are typical, and usually occur during the second and third grazing rotations – between three and nine weeks after turnout. An average reduction of 0.35% is often seen between April and August.

The greatest risk is seen where cows are grazing young, green leafy grass. This grass has lower structural fibre, so digests more quickly, and higher sugar content, which can create acidic rumen conditions. It is also higher in oil than

more mature, later season grass. In spring and early summer, the oil content in grass is 50% richer in unsaturated fats than a typical winter ration.

The combination of the acidic conditions and the high oil content in fresh grass creates a 'perfect storm' in the cow's rumen and disrupts the usual pathways used by the cow to produce milk fat. Under these conditions, dietary oil is converted to conjugated linoleic acid (CLA). This is an oil that disrupts the fat production pathways and causes a depression in milk fat. Management plays a part too in protecting butterfat.



Pre-Grazing Covers

Beyond buffer feeding, effective grazing management plays a pivotal role in the maintenance of butterfat levels. The quality of the grazing diet significantly impacts butterfat production, especially during the spring and summer months when cows are turned out to lush, green pastures.

Achieving and maintaining the appropriate pre-grazing covers during the second round of grazing is pivotal for maximising

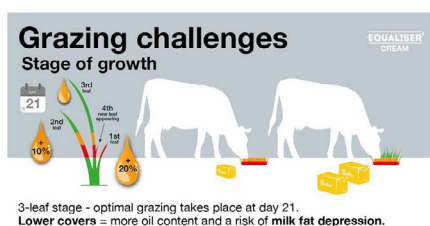
the nutritional benefits of pasture. The minimum threshold of 1600kg DM/Ha ensures that cows have access to a lush and nutrient-rich sward. Grazing at this cover promotes not only high dry matter intake but also encourages a balanced diet, rich in essential nutrients. Proper pre-grazing covers in the second round contribute to improved milk production, enhanced forage utilisation, and overall herd well-being.

Including Rumen Buffering

Incorporating rumen buffering and milk fat promoting additives into the diet is a proactive approach to mitigate milk fat depression during critical periods, such as grazing on young, high-oil content grass. Specialised additives, like Cargill's Equaliser Cream, serve to stabilise rumen pH and counteract the disruptive effects of high oil content in fresh grass. By addressing the underlying causes of milk fat depression,

these additives contribute to maintaining optimal milk composition, supporting consistent milk income for dairy farmers, and ensuring the overall welfare of the herd. Cargill's Equaliser Cream, acknowledged as a specialist rumen buffer, has demonstrated promising results, showcasing its efficacy in preventing butterfat dips when introduced early or improving levels when administered after experiencing low milk fat.

Introducing Cargill's Equaliser Cream



Cargill's Equaliser Cream is a sophisticated solution meticulously crafted to effectively address milk fat depression. This specialised rumen buffer is strategically formulated to target the root causes of milk fat depression. While conventional buffers primarily focus on rumen pH to alleviate this issue, they often lack consistent efficacy. In contrast, Cargill's Equaliser Cream boasts essential ingredients that specifically mitigate the impact of elevated oil content in grass on milk fat production. It transcends the conventional role of a one-hit wonder; in fact, Cargill's Equaliser Cream can serve as a comprehensive replacement for both buffers and yeasts in the diet.

Diverging from attempts to navigate the problem using C16 fats, Cargill's Equaliser Cream takes a preventive stance, averting the occurrence of milk fat depression. Moreover, the rumen buffering component in the cream enhances the cow's ability to extract more energy



from her diet through improved digestion, rather than relying solely on elevated energy input from C16 supplementation.

Beyond its functional benefits, the cost-effectiveness of Cargill's Equaliser Cream, as opposed to C16 fats, is a notable advantage. Free from palm sources, this cream ensures a reliable, immediate, and sustained response in maintaining milk butterfat levels. Cargill's Equaliser Cream extends

its efficacy to housed herds as well, particularly beneficial in scenarios with highly digestible diets, silage with a high acid load, or when confronted with elevated oil levels from distilled co-products.

For personalised insights on how Specialist Nutrition can help you elevate your butterfat levels, manage costs, and enhance herd health, reach out to our experts. Contact us today and discover a range of high-quality feeds and nutritional products, backed by advice from experts who understand the challenges of your fields.

Maximising Dairy Herd Productivity: A Comprehensive Guide to Buffer Feeding Strategies

In any dairy operation, animal feed stands out as both the most crucial and costly input. Farmers strive to achieve a favourable return on their investments by effectively managing feed costs without compromising the desired milk response. Buffer feeding stands as a cornerstone in the quest to elevate dairy herd productivity, particularly during the critical phases of peak lactation.



In this article, the experts from Specialist Nutrition delve into the multifaceted aims, pivotal considerations, and practical strategies associated with effective buffer feeding, offering dairy farmers valuable insights to enhance their herd's overall performance.

The Role of Buffer Feeding

Buffer feeding serves as a vital strategy to bridge the nutritional gap for dairy cows. This approach enables farmers to complement the available grass or silage resources, ensuring that the nutritional requirements of the cows are met consistently throughout the year while maintaining a balanced diet.

The flexibility of buffer feeding proves instrumental in addressing any shortfalls in overall dry matter intake (DMI) targets, fostering optimum rumen function. This, in turn, contributes to achieving desirable milk quality, maximising solids, and preserving body condition.

Benefits of Buffer Feeding

The benefits of buffer feeding revolve around keeping the DMI up along with maintaining BCS, and those actions aid the following:

1. Minimising Body Condition Loss

One primary objective of buffer feeding is to safeguard dairy cows against undue body condition loss, ensuring they maintain an optimal weight during pivotal periods of their lactation cycle.

2. Improving Herd Health

A good buffer feeding strategy contributes significantly to overall herd health. By providing a well-balanced diet, it bolsters the immune system, reducing the risk of diseases and promoting resilience.

3. Enhancing Milk Solids, Especially Milk Fat

Buffer feeding plays a pivotal role in the quest for improved milk solids, with a specific focus on increasing the coveted milk fat content. This not only enhances the quality of the produced milk but also contributes to the economic viability of dairy operations.

4. Boosting Fertility Performance Through Nutrition

Nutritional aspects embedded within the buffer feeding regimen are strategically designed to positively influence fertility performance in dairy cows. This holistic

approach addresses the symbiotic relationship between nutrition and reproductive health.

5. Utilising Spring Grass Efficiently While Budgeting

An efficient buffer feeding strategy ensures the optimal utilisation of spring grass while adhering to budgetary constraints. This delicate balance is key to achieving economic advantages without compromising on nutritional quality.

6. Maximising Dry Matter Intake (DMI) for Cows

Buffer feeding stands as a reliable method to ensure that cows achieve and maintain optimal dry matter intake at all times. This not only supports their nutritional needs but also contributes to their overall well-being and performance.

Additive Supplementation

Integrating strategic additive supplementation enhances the effectiveness of the buffer feeding strategy. This addition offers tailored nutritional support, addressing specific needs to further boost productivity.

Reduce Your Time And Labour With Silostop® Protective Films & Covers

Protecting your silage from oxygen, wildlife, sunlight and more has never been easier thanks to Silostop protective films and covers.

Using Silostop will ensure you have the best quality silage, with 50% less time and labour than it takes to cover your pit with plastic and tyres.

These easy-to-use silage pit solutions are super robust and will last year after year to increase your farm's efficiency and free you up to complete other essential tasks.

Silostop users enjoy a high return on investment, reduced environmental impact and improved silage quality. For the best solution to protect your silage from oxygen, birds/wildlife, UV light, and more choose from our innovative Silostop range.



SILOSTOP
Orange Film >



SILOSTOP
Anti-UV Cover >

SILOSTOP Values

Innovation

Keeping at the forefront of research and development is key. We utilise unique, research-backed, industry-leading products in combination with exceptional technical support to deliver a reduction in your waste and an increase on your return on investment.

Support

Providing you with peace of mind is our top priority. Our team of technical experts are dedicated to keeping up to date with the latest developments in the field to give you the best support possible throughout your ensiling process, ensuring you get the most out of your silage storage.

Responsibility

We live and breathe people and the planet. Taking care of our team, customers, suppliers, and environment is the beating heart of our business. Engaging in more sustainable practices and processes allows us to build long-lasting relationships, reduce our impact on the planet, and actively mitigate your carbon footprint.

For more information on Specialist Nutrition's Silostop range, please call + 353 (0) 51 833071.



Meet The Team

Justin McDonagh, Head of Technical and Sustainability

As Head of Technical and Sustainability at Specialist Nutrition, Dr Justin McDonagh is committed to delivering practical solutions that deliver substantial gains for farmers.

Hailing from a suckler beef and sheep farm in Co Galway, Justin has spent his career studying animal nutrition to achieve optimal results in beef, dairy and sheep performance.

Justin's mix of on-farm experience coupled with scientific expertise and international best practice in animal nutrition, provides a robust foundation for problem solving and prevention to maximise profitability on Irish beef, dairy and sheep farms.

With a strong track record in delivering practical solutions to the most complex of animal nutrition problems, he has helped many farmers make substantial increases in return on investment.

Justin's role centres on leading the technical consultant team of nutritionists. This involves advising on and designing solutions and preventative measures to support feed input efficiency, maximise farm profits, and promote sustainable feeding solutions.

He explains how the appliance of the latest advances in nutritional science plays a key role in farm success.

"I believe it's crucial that any advice given to



farmers on improving animal nutrition on their farms is science-based and tailored to each herd and even each animal. Armed with the best scientific approach, our team works with farmers to develop easy-to-execute strategies that ensure optimal animal well-being and performance using the most appropriate and practical techniques and tools," he says.

The process of improving animal performance starts with a visit to each client's farm.

"At Specialist Nutrition, we help farmers get the best from their herds by starting with in-depth investigation and analysis of their farms and practices," he explains.

"From there, we can help farmers get the

most from their grazed grass and silage, advise on integrating moist or liquid feeds into animal diets, optimise buffer feeding solutions, suggest optimal forage storage or animal housing, identify the most appropriate mineral additives to improve performance, and more.

"Central to our approach is that any analysis is bespoke to each herd and the feed available on each farm. This ensures that any advice on the best actions the farmer can take is tailored to deliver the best possible results."

Justin holds a degree in Animal and Crop Production from University College Dublin; a PhD from Queens University Belfast in Agriculture, Agriculture Operations, and Related Sciences; a Business Management Essentials Certificate from Cornell University; and a Diploma in Ruminant Nutrition (Animal Nutrition) from Harper Adams University.

He has a wealth of hands-on experience and international technical knowledge, having worked in animal nutrition roles in Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Germany, New Zealand and the USA.

Justin spent almost three years working with Specialist Nutrition USA before returning to Ireland to lead the technical aspect of the business here. A key part of his current role is to drive environmental sustainability solutions that maximise results for farmers, suppliers, and the business as a whole.

For expert advice from Justin and the team or to request a farm visit, call us on + 353 (0) 51 833071.

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