

PREVENTING DUSTY HOME MIXED DIETS

Anyone who home-mixes will know how important it is to reduce the problems caused by dust which include reduced palatability, lower intakes and a greater risk of respiratory problems.

Tim Beer of Orleigh Farms Ltd near Bideford has managed to eliminate the issues caused by dust by adding Dustbuster, a blend of low sugar liquid co-products and oils produced by ED&F Man, to the diets he mixes for his flock of Suffolk x Mule ewes, their lambs and a neighbour's beef finishing enterprise.

Adding the liquid supplement which is formulated to optimise mixing ability with the other ingredients, binding to the fine particles to suppress the dust. Being a 13ME, 18% crude protein product, it can be added without diluting the energy density of home mixes.

As the 350 ewes and around 520 lambs are kept on just 70 acres of grass from lambing until the end of August, creep feeding is a key part of the system, and the quality of mix is critical. Lambing starts in late January and this year lambing percentage was 175%.

Tim grows a range of arable crops including wheat, barley, oats, potatoes and some forage maize grown on contract for local dairy farmers. He needs the lambs off the farm by harvest. Ewes are overwintered on neighbouring dairy farms and move onto forage rape / stubble turnips after lambing to preserve grass when needed as the spring crops are drilled.

"As we stock the sheep tightly we need to supplement both ewes and lambs. Home-mixing means we can use the oats we grow as a break crop. We have used Dustbuster in all mixes for six years, following discussions with Glen Johns as we wanted to improve the presentation of the mixes and improve intakes," Tim comments.

Tim operates a very simple system, mixing half tonne batches in a concrete mixer. Dustbuster is supplied in IBCs and is added to the mixer in buckets.

The ewe diet comprises 60% oats, 25% of Harpers 33% Sheep Protein Pellets, 15% beans and 2.5% of Dustbuster. The ewes are fed 1kg/day at lambing along with good quality haylage.

The lamb diet is made up of 60% oats, 10% beans and 30% of Harpers 20% protein Lamb Balancer Pellets with double minerals and double Ammonium Chloride to help reduce the incidence of urinary calculi.

The lamb mix also contains 4% (40kg/t) of Dustbuster. *"The higher rate is included as it helps increase palatability as well as reducing dust and it is important to achieve good intakes and maximise daily liveweight gain,"* Glen Johns explains.

The lambs are fed adlib through creep feeders and by week 14 after lambing 67 lambs had already been sold, averaging 21.8kg deadweight, sold to Dunbia Jaspers. The lambs graded well with 50% U and 50% R.

For the last 18 months, Tim has also been mixing the diets for Stephen Grigg who finishes 50 dairy cross Belgian Blue cattle per year at Netherdown Farm near Bideford. Calves are bought from a local dairy farm at three months old.

Depending on when they arrive on the farm, some cattle are housed all the time finishing at 16-18 months old, averaging 1.4kg daily liveweight gain.



Other cattle are turned out to graze and will finish at 22 months old. All cattle get 4-5kg of mix in the last three months.

The home mix is based on

Stephen's own barley and comprises 70% barley, 25% of Harpers 33% Cattle Protein Pellet with yeast and 5% of Dustbuster.

"We include more Dustbuster as the barley is dried to 13-14%, meaning it can be very dusty when processed. Since we started on the new mix we have seen better intakes and fewer cattle with respiratory problems. The mix has a really nice nose which improves palatability and helps intakes," Stephen comments.

Danielle Goatley, ED&F Man Southern Commercial Manager stresses that dust in home mixes can be an issue affecting many farmers looking to make the most of home-grown cereals.

"Adding Dustbuster is a highly effective way to reduce the problems caused by dust regardless of the animals you rear or the size of mix produced. Reducing dust can also make the production and feed out better for staff and stock alike."



FARM FACTS

70 acres of grassland and **160 acres** of mixed arable

350 Suffolk X Mule ewes

175% lambing percentage

Home mix fed to all stock

INDUSTRY VIEWPOINT

Well summer has finally arrived!

This year everything seems to be two weeks early, with many second cuts completed by the Royal Cornwall Show. I would like to invite you to our Massey Harpers village at the show, stand 728. Please join us for refreshments and a natter. We have seven key suppliers joining us across the three-day event, with special show offers and advice.

It has been very disappointing to see the beef deadweight price fall way below the magic £6/kg, but there is now light at the end of the tunnel for milk prices, with the last three GDT auctions going up.

Lamb prices have hit record highs, so let's get these lambs finished and off farm to reduce the stocking density, freeing up grass for ewes leading up to tupping.

We are now in full swing manufacturing game feeds.

Speak to Myles or Andy for enquiries.

Thank you to Jack Tucker for hosting a fabulous calf open day, where over 150 farmers attended!

After all the great feedback from customers and future customers, we hope to hold more open days in the future.



RAW MATERIALS

MARKET UPDATE

Geopolitics continue to influence agricultural markets, with disruption around the Strait of Hormuz still dominating energy prices and creating uncertainty across global agriculture. Despite more vessels crossing the Strait, there remains little sign of resolution. Mid-May also brought positive news as talks between Trump and China strengthened agricultural trade commitments, with agricultural markets firming on the back of the news. Traders and fund managers remain nervous, with premiums being built into prices as a precaution and volatility expected to continue.

CEREALS

The cereal market has seen a change in sentiment. Old crop wheat remains difficult to purchase, with a lack of sellers and expectations of stronger prices, while new crop values are up around £10-15/t. The latest USDA report reduced global wheat production forecasts and the next couple of months will be critical for crop development and price direction. If the Middle East conflict were to ease, we could see some pressure come off prices.

PROTEINS & FIBRES

Global soya stocks remain well supplied, although current opinion suggests soya and the wider protein complex remain overpriced. Sunflower values have strengthened following disruption at a crushing plant in Argentina, which has tightened availability, while old crop rape remains tight ahead of new crop availability. Sugar beet remains difficult to source and, with a smaller UK crop expected and limited imports available, prices are likely to stay firm.



JOHN SLUGGETT

Sadly, we have lost a great friend who played an important part in the development of Harpers Home Mix. John Sluggett was our first bulk haulage contractor. He passed away peacefully at home in Milton Damerell last month at the age of 91.

He and his wife Peggy had five children between them. Their son Jeremy was working alongside his father, each driving a lorry, when we started our feed business in 1992 at Stibb Cross. They offered to deliver our bulk feed with 24 hours' notice, which helped the company provide an exceptional level of service and really helped the business grow. The two businesses grew side by side with John adding a new lorry every year until the fleet numbered 14 and was delivering 120,000 tonnes of feed a year. John was a good employer. He was firm but fair and had the respect of his team and always expected high standards.

At his funeral service the church was full with family, friends, farmers and most of his lorry drivers. Parked just outside the church was his favourite lorry. The 51 plate Leyland lorry was only driven by John and was not allowed to retire or be sold. The lorry had been beautifully polished up by his senior mechanic, Neil Roberts, and reflected the quality of the work John did. He prided himself on the quality of his lorry fleet and this went a long way towards providing the excellent service he did to Harpers Home Mix.

Lorries were John's business, but his passion was farming. He built up a land holding and sourced top quality Limousin cross store cattle from Wales and he took great pleasure from seeing his cattle thrive. John was always a smart man, through his national service and on into business. He always wore clean overalls, polished boots and a clean, smart shirt every day.



He was brisk in his thoughts and movements; he achieved a level of efficiency by simply not allowing anyone in his employment to waste any time.

He will be fondly remembered by all of us who worked with him, our particular respect to Andrea Shadrack, granddaughter Phillipa, grandson Daniel and his son Jeremy for all their care in allowing John's final wish to finish his journey at home.

ENDFIELD FARM

Peter and Sadie Bullock have been building their predominantly Jersey herd at Endfield Farm, near Crediton, since starting dairy farming in 2017.

Today they run 160 cows, with more than 80% pedigree, and homebred replacements are becoming an increasingly important part of the herd's future.

For the Bullocks, getting heifers into the herd at the right age and in the right condition is a key objective. Their aim is for heifers to calve at two years old and enter the herd at the beginning of the autumn block, helping them settle in and giving them the best chance of getting back in calf successfully.

"The replacements are a key part of developing the herd as we look to build on the quality of the cows," explains Peter. *"This year will be the first year we won't need to purchase any replacements as we have 34 heifers due to calve and 36 heifer calves already on the ground."*

The herd grazes from mid-March through to mid-October and currently averages 7,300 litres at 5.45% fat and 4.0% protein. In 2025, calving ran from 1st September until 20th November, with plans to tighten the block further again this year. Having initially bought cows to establish the herd, Peter and Sadie are now seeing the benefits of rearing their own replacements coming through. For the first time, they expect to have enough homebred animals coming forward that no purchased replacements will be needed.

Getting calves off to the right start is a major focus at Endfield Farm, with Peter and Sadie placing particular emphasis on calf health and early development. All calves receive four litres of colostrum as soon as possible after birth with a minimum Brix reading of 25. Total proteins are also checked regularly and currently sit in the top three of their vet discussion group league table.

Calves are kept in groups of three before weaning and following discussions with vet Danielle Priestley from St Boniface Farm Vets, the heifer calves moved onto Trouw Nutrition's Milkivit ONE milk replacer.

Danielle says health challenges early in life can have long-term consequences.

"The healthier the calves are before weaning, the greater the chance they will grow well, perform strongly and remain in the herd longer."

Calves move onto milk replacer by the end of day two and are fed twice daily using teated buckets. Milk replacer is mixed at 135g/litre and fed at 38°C, with calves reaching eight litres a day by the end of week one and intakes peaking at 11 litres daily.

Solid feed is available from day one and calves are weaned over three weeks, on a step-down basis, at 10-11 weeks old. Milk replacer intakes are increased through a standard feed curve, with calves receiving increasing volumes as they develop.

Peter says growth and performance have stood out. *"Initially solid feed intakes are small but as we step milk back, intakes increase and by the time calves are weaned they are consuming around 2.5kg each day."*

Weaning weights reached 270% of birthweight and the couple have also been pleased with calf health and activity levels.

Sadie adds, *"We have never had calves looking so well and playing as much as they have. The calves are full of energy and despite the higher milk intakes the beds have been really dry. We have not had to use any antibiotics in our pre-weaned heifer calves and had no mortality this year."*

Milkivit ONE is 27% fat with a pioneering composition of the fat to more closely resemble cow's milk. It is a 23% protein Energized Calf Milk containing 50% skimmed milk and 100% dairy protein for optimum digestion and low osmolality, allowing elevated feed rates for high daily live weight gain and the development of a robust immune system.

"Fat is the most energy dense ingredient in milk replacers and the high fat content ensures higher energy intakes," comments Dr Laura Tennant from Trouw Nutrition.

Milkivit ONE contains LactoFat Pro, a unique fatty acid technology which helps balance the fatty acids in the milk replacer. This superior balance of fatty acids has been shown to elevate calf health, supporting better development of the gastrointestinal tract and rumen. Calves fed Milkivit ONE in trials had reduced incidence and severity of diarrhoea with lower treatment days.



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TWO-STAGE FEEDING REGIME FOR RELEASING GAME BIRDS

Keeping stress low and providing the right nutrition at release can significantly improve game bird performance by the shooting season.

Moving poults from rearing fields into release pens is a stressful transition, exposing birds to new environments, predators and changes in diet. Stress can reduce growth, affect feed conversion and increase disease risk, making careful management essential.

For best results, I suggest a two-stage feeding regime at release to make sure you get the most from your birds. For every 1,000 birds released you will need two tonnes of grower and release, a tonne for each phase.

For the first two to three weeks after release, birds should remain on a high-protein 20% Game Grower Pellet to maintain growth, energy levels and disease resistance. Once birds are settled in the pens, feed can gradually switch to the lower protein 16% Poultry Release Pellet. Although lower in crude protein, this diet still contains adequate amino acids such as lysine and methionine to support muscle development and feathering, which is key for strong flight.

Wheat can then be introduced gradually, with pellets being phased out by week five to six, helping birds transition smoothly and stress free.



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TAKING STOCK AFTER LAMBING



June is a good point in the sheep calendar to step back and take stock of the season so far. Once lambing is behind you, there is an opportunity to assess what worked well and identify areas that may need attention before next season.

Lambing performance should be reviewed carefully, particularly where challenges arose. This could include shed design and set-up, disease or health issues, or areas where management changes could improve flock performance. It is often easier to identify what worked and what did not while the season is still fresh in the mind.

Breeding plans for the coming season can also begin to take shape. This includes reviewing ram selection, planning vaccination requirements for breeding stock and considering replacement ewe strategy. If replacements are being purchased, quarantine procedures and abortion vaccination protocols should be planned well in advance.

It is also worth reassessing the wider flock system. Some producers may aim to target early season lamb prices, which are often strongest from April through to mid-June. Others may prefer outdoor lambing systems with lambs sold throughout winter, grazed on root crops or finished indoors where larger numbers suit the system.

Grass supply can often create challenges within sheep systems, particularly from early winter onwards when growth slows significantly. Higher stocking rates and wet weather can make maintaining grass availability for ewes and early born lambs more challenging.

Prolonged wet periods, such as those experienced earlier this year, can reduce dry matter intake in ewes, meaning supplementary forage and concentrate feeding before lambing needs careful planning and tailoring to flock requirements.

Once lambs are on the ground, lower milk yield in ewes can quickly impact lamb growth, particularly in twin-bearing ewes. Creep feeding can help bridge this gap and maximise growth.

MAKING THE MOST OF CREEP FEEDING

Feed conversion is more efficient in younger lambs, making creep feeding a useful tool in many systems. Getting lambs away earlier can also reduce exposure to parasites, which can lead to reduced growth rates and increased mortality.

Getting lambs finished earlier can also bring marketing advantages, whether selling liveweight or deadweight, with potential improvements in grading and kill-out percentage.

Creep feeding with Harpers Lamb Start 2 Finish Pellets can reduce pressure on ewes by shifting some nutrient demand away from milk and onto creep feed intake. This can help maintain ewe body condition through lactation.

Ewe body condition score at weaning can have a significant influence on future flock performance. Ewes below body condition score two at weaning are more likely to produce singles the following year.

If ewes do conceive twins, those lambs also tend to be lighter at birth.

PLANNING AHEAD AT WEANING

By 12 weeks of age, lambs will have been grazing long enough that milk contributes far less to their diet as rumen development progresses. The period between weaning and tupping then becomes an important opportunity for ewes to regain body condition, although this often coincides with grass shortages.

It can take six to eight weeks for a ewe to gain one body condition score on good quality grass, with two scores taking considerably longer. Early weaning of lean ewes can therefore be important where extra recovery time is needed.

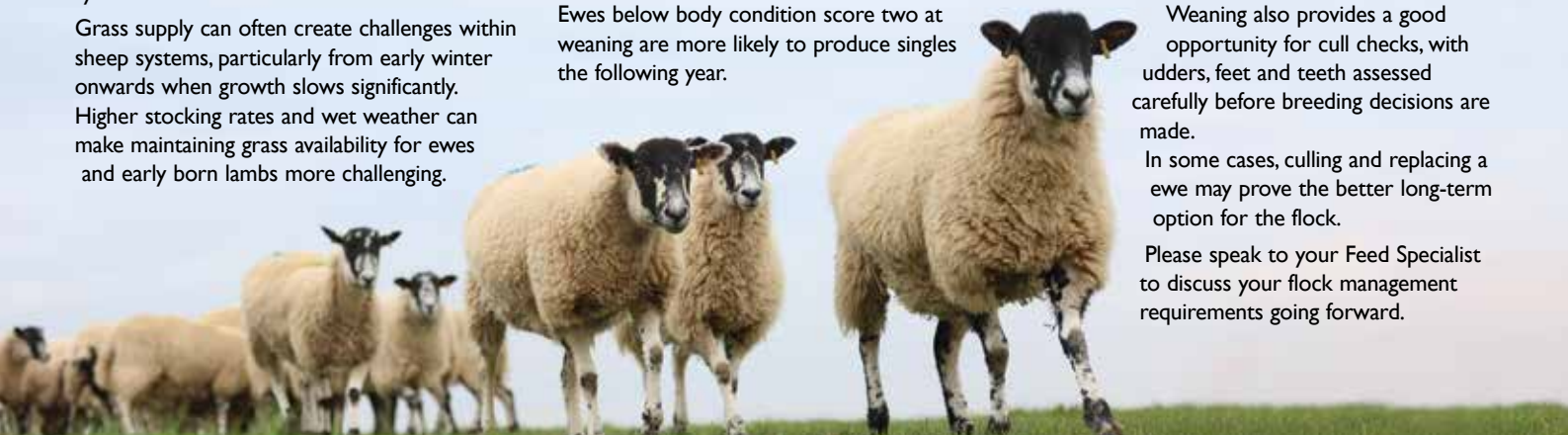
Sorting ewes into management groups at weaning can help target nutrition more effectively. Management groups may include ewes above BCS 3.5, those between BCS 2.5–3 requiring improvement, and thinner ewes below BCS 2.5 needing additional support.

Where weaning takes place over a period, prioritise thinner ewes first to allow extra recovery time before tupping.

Weaning also provides a good opportunity for cull checks, with udders, feet and teeth assessed carefully before breeding decisions are made.

In some cases, culling and replacing a ewe may prove the better long-term option for the flock.

Please speak to your Feed Specialist to discuss your flock management requirements going forward.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION
Royal Cornwall Show - Stand 728	Thursday 4th – Saturday 6th June	Royal Cornwall Showground, Wadebridge, PL27 7JE
Harpers Rotary Annual Charity Golf Day	Saturday 4th July	Holsworthy Golf Cub, EX22 6LP
Liskeard Show	Saturday 11th July	Merrymeet, PL14 3LE
Mid Devon Show	Saturday 25th July	Tiverton, EX16 7PP
Totnes Show	Sunday 26th July	Berry Pomeroy, Totnes, TQ9 6LE
Woolsery Show	Monday 27th July	Clovelly Court, EX39 5SY
NSA Sheep Event	Tuesday 28th July	Three Counties Showground, WR13 6NW
Yealmpton Show	Wednesday 29th July	Kitley Lawn, PL8 2NN
Launceston Show	Thursday 30th July	Launceston PL15 7EZ
North Devon Show	Wednesday 5th August	Umberleigh, EX37 8DX
Honiton Show	Thursday 6th August	Gittisham, EX14 3AW