

**Press release**

3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018

**Optimise silage quality and reap the benefits**

The cold, wet spring has caused havoc for livestock producers due to lack of forage, but with the grass now growing, they can take steps to boost silage quality and cut input costs.

Grassland UK – which is being held on 10 May – is bringing together top industry experts and the latest machinery to help farmers improve productivity at minimal cost, in what has been a very difficult growing season.

“There’s a lot of emphasis on producing top quality silage right now, but many people have struggled with sowing new leys, applying timely fertiliser and getting the growth rates they require,” says head of show, Alan Lyons. “Despite this, there is still potential to get a number of quality cuts in – and with the right management there’s a lot of scope to get more from the silage you produce.”

Roy Eastlake at Biotal suggests farmers consider cutting silage more frequently this season – every four weeks - so that silage is more digestible and has a higher energy content, leading to lower purchased feed costs. “The first part of the process is to plan how much forage you’ll need for the whole year so you know what you’re dealing with.” He advises doing pre-cut grass testing to identify weaknesses and understand how it will behave as a silage. Although more frequent cuts will improve silage quality, the overall yield should be similar, so it’s worth having a discussion with any contractors prior to making the change. “A lot of contractors will charge on weight now, rather than acreage, so set targets beforehand.

“The challenge is for growers to achieve energy densities of 11.5MJ/kg dry matter, with a neutral detergent fibre of 40%, free nitrates under 1000mg/kg and sugars greater than 10% in the DM – it can be done.”

Using a conditioning mower can produce a more rapid wilt to produce 30-35% DM silage, says Mr Eastlake. “Leave a good 6-7cm of stubble in the field as this allows the crop to rapidly regrow.”

Visitors to the event – which is sponsored by Mole Valley Farmers and Oliver Seeds - will see a wide range of mowers, tedders, rakes, balers and harvesters in action, so they can compare the efficacy of each machine. They can also see different grass varieties and discuss optimal management with more than 180 leading exhibitors.

According to Bill Reilly at Germinal, having red clovers in the grass mix can help increase persistency of the sward, add to the protein content of the forage, and reduce the need for bagged fertiliser. “Adding high sugar grass can maximise daily live weight gain, at up to 386g/day with plantain and chicory. The metabolised energy comes at a fifth of the cost of cake and lasts a good deal longer.”

When ensiling, Mr Eastlake recommends picking the grass up within 12-16 hours of mowing. "It's still respiring once it has been cut, so the quicker it's in the clamp and sealed, the less nutrients that are lost." Of course, the length of wilt will depend on how dry the grass is, as wet grass will require longer, he adds. "It will also want a crop specific inoculant to protect it and good clamp management – from creating thin layers of grass to airtight sheeting."

Farmers can see good clamp management in action at Grassland UK, with the working machines filling the farm silage clamp – sponsored by Galebreaker - throughout the day. From rollers to plastic film sheeting, and shear grabs to feeding equipment, they can discuss every stage of the silage making process for optimum efficiencies.

Piers Badnell at LIC believes that quality forage is one of the keys to efficient livestock production. "In this temperate climate it's a competitive advantage and we need to fully utilise it to bring costs down, keep cows out for longer and use less machinery and labour."

Visitors to Grassland UK can obtain 2 BASIS CPD points for those who register. The register will be located in the seminars marquee in the trade stand field.

- Grassland UK 2018 takes place on Bridge Farm & Bagborough Farm, adjacent to the Bath & West Showground on Thursday 10 May from 9am to 4pm. Tickets cost £17 (£15 for students) in advance or £20 on the gate. For more information and to book tickets head to [www.bathandwest.com](http://www.bathandwest.com).

### Editor's notes

The show is sponsored by Mole Valley Famers and Oliver Seeds, and is organised in association with Farmers Guardian.

### What to do

- See a massive collection of **working grass and muck machinery**
- Meet over **180 leading suppliers** to discuss the **latest products and new ideas**
- Visit the sown plots for the **latest varieties and agronomy advice**
- **Gather valuable information** from the British Grassland Society seminar programme offering a mix of technical/agronomic topics such as grass management, varieties and soil management, alongside more business-oriented topics, including legislation changes
- **Make the most of your manures in the muck area**
- **Learn how to maximise returns from your grass, whether grazed or ensiled**

### Over 180 companies will be showcasing their products and services:

- Seed supply and plant breeding
- Crop establishment and pasture management
- Crop protection and nutrition
- Forage harvesting, mowing and baling
- Pasture improvement
- Handling equipment
- Ensiling and clamping
- Livestock feeding and management
- Muck and slurry application & storage
- Soil and nutrient management
- Business advice and services

For a list of booked exhibitors please visit the website [www.bathandwest.com](http://www.bathandwest.com).

### **About the Royal Bath & West of England Society**

The Society was founded in 1777 in Bath by a group of philanthropists led by Edmund Rack.

The Society was formed with the aims of encouraging agriculture, arts, manufacture and commerce, and is a registered charity organisation (Registered Charity Number 1039397).

Our charitable activities provide:

- Agriculture, veterinary, educational and art scholarships
- Technical events and Seminars
- Practical farming advice and conferences
- Countryside Education
- Diversification advice for farmers
- Education for children
- A market place for countryside products

As the Society celebrates its 241<sup>st</sup> year it continues to deliver a wonderful mix of established traditional exhibits through to the latest energy technology and contemporary entertainment.

The entertainment and features around the 242-acre site ensure enjoyment for every member of the family and include attractions that are spectacular to watch, educational, inspirational, “hands on” or just plain fun.