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by Louisa Lloyd, NWF Ruminant Nutritionist



Good maternity pen hygiene

Calving is a time when both the cow and the newborn calf are especially susceptible to disease due to lowered immunity. To minimise disease spreading to the new calf or cow, the calving area and facilities need to be clean and in good working order. If possible, calving pens should be cleaned out between each calving. Efforts should be made to minimise the length of time a calf spends in the calving pen.

Ensure adequate early intake of good quality colostrum.

Calves should receive colostrum within the first four hours of life. Ideally, four litres, or 10% of the calf's birthweight, of high-quality colostrum should be fed within the first four hours of life. To ensure passive transfer occurs successfully, the calf should then receive another two litres of colostrum within the next 12 hours. Ensuring the calf drinks within the first four hours of life is vitally important, as the openings in the wall of the small intestine that allow for the absorption of antibodies begin to close immediately.

Within 24 hours, these openings will be completely closed. This early intake is critical because the calf is born without its own protective antibodies.

Brix Refractor Reading	Quality	IgG Concentration
25%+	Very Good	75mg/ml
22%	Good	<50mg/ml
20%	Poor	50mg/ml

Colostrum for first feeding should be 22% or over

Provide plenty of fresh, clean water

The provision of clean water is very important during the milk feeding stage, as the development of the rumen depends on the fermentation of starter feed and forage, water is necessary for this fermentation to take place. Regardless of the milk feeding system, calves should be given ad-lib access to clean drinking water from birth. Calves will drink four litres of water for every 1kg of creep they consume.

Don't let growth rates drop whilst weaning

Abrupt weaning places sudden stress on the calf because it loses its milk supply overnight without having fully adapted to solid feed. This stress can depress the immune system, reduce feed intake, and slow down rumen development.

A poorly developed rumen leads to reduced nutrient absorption, making calves more vulnerable to digestive upsets and poor growth. A step-down weaning programme allows the rumen to mature gradually, promotes consistent starter intake, and results in smoother transitions with fewer health issues.

Maintain consistent target growth rates

Poor nutrition and intakes can result in heifers not reaching puberty in time to breed. To reach 55-60% mature bodyweight at 15 months, a practical and effective nutrition plan must be applied between months four to twelve. Between four and 15 months of age, heifers must be on a settled diet prior to service with good quality silage and between 1-2kg of grower concentrate to achieve a steady growth rate of 0.7kg/day. Feed space and stocking density greatly influence growth target achievements.

As heifers approach calving at 24 months, they should be 90% of their mature cow weight. The target daily live weight gain for heifers is 0.75 – 0.80 k/day.

Age	Growth Target (kg/day)	Target % of mature BW
0 - 3 months	0.7 - 0.8	17%
4 - 12 months	0.7 - 0.8	50%
13 - 15 months	0.7 - 0.8	55%
16 - 24 months	0.7 - 0.8	90%

Correct transition management

Getting nutrition right during this critical period ensures cows and heifers are in optimum body condition before calving. Six to eight weeks before calving, heifers should be supplemented with minerals. Testing the forage in animals' diet will allow you to determine its mineral status.

Effective transition management ensures that cows commence cycling shortly after calving, enabling them to successfully rebreed within 365 days.

For further information and support on calving arrange an on-farm visit with one of our NWF Sales Specialists.



Using youngstock signals for sustainable returns

by Lucy Richardson, NWF Youngstock Specialist



Effective youngstock management relies on interpreting behavioural and physical signals that indicate a calf's health, comfort and overall development. Systematic observation allows farmers to identify early deviations from normal behaviour or condition, enabling timely interventions. Detecting issues at an early stage minimises growth checks, reduces veterinary costs, and supports more consistent performance across the rearing period. Conversely, failing to recognise or act on these signals increases the risk of disease outbreaks, extended rearing times and reduced lifetime productivity.

Cow SIGNALS[®]
DIAMOND



The Calf Signals model outlines six core requirements for successful calf rearing: **feed, water, space, light, air, and rest**. Ensuring each requirement is consistently met provides the foundation for strong early development and resilience.

1. Feed

Nutrition is arguably the most influential factor in early calf performance. Effective colostrum management remains essential for establishing immunity; calves should receive at least two litres within the first two hours of life, followed by a total of four litres within eight hours to ensure adequate immunoglobulin absorption before gut closure.

After the initial neonatal phase, the combination of high quality calf starter pellets and short chop straw provides the foundation for rumen development. Straw cut to around two centimetres supports healthy rumination and papillae formation without restricting overall intake. This approach enables calves to adapt more smoothly to solid feed and supports a consistent weaning process. **Speak to your local NWF sales specialist about our comprehensive range of youngstock feeds.**

2. Space

Appropriate space allocation improves social behaviour, reduces stress and limits disease transmission. Adequate feeding space encourages equal access to concentrate feed and reduces competition within groups.

- **Group housing feeding space:** Minimum **2 m² feeding space per calf**.
- **Bedded area:**
 - Calves on milk: **≥ 2.5 m² per calf**
 - Weaned calves: **≥ 3.5 m² per calf**

3. Water

Access to fresh, clean water from birth is essential for rumen development and overall performance. Calves will consistently consume more starter feed when water is readily available, which accelerates rumen function and supports an earlier transition away from milk. Offering water at a tepid temperature, ideally between 16°C and 18°C, can be particularly beneficial in colder months, encouraging improved intake and reducing thermal stress.

4. Light

Light plays a key role in calf behaviour and feed intake and patterns. Adequate illumination supports a stable daily rhythm and enables early detection of health issues.

- Provide a minimum of **50 lux of artificial light**, supplemented by natural light.
- Aim for a total ambient level of **200 lux**, enabling proper observation and supporting a stable daily rhythm.

5. Air

Good ventilation is essential for maintaining respiratory health and minimising pathogen load. Calves are especially vulnerable to airborne irritants and high humidity, making fresh, well circulated air a fundamental requirement.

- Target **3.5 – 4 complete air exchanges per hour**, ensuring fresh air is introduced without creating draughts at calf level.

Effective ventilation is one of the most reliable defences against pneumonia, a common cause of growth restriction in youngstock.

6. Rest

Rest is the final pillar of the calf signals model and a crucial component of immunity, thermoregulation and energy conservation. Deep, dry bedding is essential for allowing calves to lie comfortably and maintain an appropriate body temperature, particularly in colder weather.

Nesting scores provide a simple tool for assessing bedding quality.





Score	Description
1	The calf's legs are entirely visible when lying down.
2	The calf's legs are partially visible when lying down.
3	The calf's legs are not visible when lying down.

Aim for a **nesting score of 3**, particularly for calves under two months old. An easy way to test your bedding is to complete a drop knee test. Your bedding should be deep enough that dropping to your knees and waiting 30 seconds is neither painful nor leaves you with wet knees!

The NWF Agricultural YouTube channel features videos with insight on drop knee test and other youngstock rearing advice.

Give your calves the best start in life

The NWF Milk Replacer range provides outstanding nutrition for calves. The range is formulated using quality, traceable ingredients and is suitable for calf rearing programmes on either bucket systems or computed-controlled machines. The extensive range ensures you can find the perfect protein and oil levels to suit your needs.

Milk Replacer	Protein	Oil
SKIMMED		
NWF ULTRA MILK EMERALD	21.5%	18%
NWF ULTRA MILK GOLD	22%	19%
NWF ULTRA MILK YELLOW	22%	18%
NWF ULTRA MILK DIAMOND	23%	20%
NWF ULTRA MILK PLATINUM	23%	25%
NWF ULTRA LIFE - SKIM 	24%	20%
NWF ULTRA LIFE ELITE 	22.5%	22.5%
MILKIVIT ENERGIZED 	22.5%	25%
MILKIVIT ONE	23%	27%
WHEY		
NWF ULTRA MILK BLUE	22%	19%
NWF ULTRA MILK SAPPHIRE	22.5%	18%
NWF ULTRA MILK RUBY	24%	20%
NWF ULTRA HI PRO HEIFER	26%	17%
NWF ULTRA LIFE WHEY 	24%	20%

NEW for 2026: Rehydration and Recovery Range

REVIDRAL ACE

Use: Rapid calcium and electrolyte boost post-calving.

Benefits: Highly bioavailable calcium to support energy, gut function and immune response, helping cows get up and going quickly after calving.

HYDROFORCE

Use: Fast-acting rehydration support for calves and lambs during stress, scour or dehydration.

Benefits: Replaces lost electrolytes, glucose and salts; supports hydration, digestion and overall physiological recovery.

HYDRO-LITE

Use: Cost-effective powdered rehydration for calves.

Benefits: Provides glucose, sodium and potassium salts to aid recovery from scour, fever, heat stress and other dehydration risks.

PREBIOFORCE

Use: Gut health support blended from yeast derivatives and natural plant extracts.

Benefits: Supports digestion, reduces the risk of neonatal diarrhoea, aids recovery from gut challenges, promotes immunity and improves rumen performance.

"We've recently switched to **NWF's Ultra Milk Platinum Milk Replacer** for rearing our bought-in calves, and the difference has been clear from day one. We were looking to improve daily live weight gains, so decided to try a new milk replacer, and so far we're genuinely impressed. The calves have a noticeable shine to them now, something we never saw with our previous milk replacer. We feed at 150g per litre, and when paired with a good calf coarse mix, the growth rates have been excellent. It mixes easily, stays consistent, and doesn't separate — which makes feeding that much easier. We wouldn't hesitate to recommend Ultra Milk Platinum to any farm wanting to get the most out of their calves."

M L & S E Jones, Welshpool, Powys



Nutrition and Feeding

Advice, feed plans



Weighing and Growth Monitoring

Weighing scales, weigh banding, calculators



REARING FOR A BETTER FUTURE



Health and Housing

Checklists, scoresheets

Protocols and Procedures

Ranging from colostrum management & testing to hygiene and biosecurity.

For further information on the NWF youngstock team, or to enquire about our free weighing and growth monitoring services, please email youngstock@nwfagriculture.co.uk

Preparations for turnout. Are you ready?

by Paul Mardell, NWF Technical Development Manager



These are the key steps needed to ensure a smooth and efficient turnout to grass, helping you maximise milk production and maintain herd health during these challenging conditions.

With the continued wet weather and waterlogged ground conditions, February 2026 has been the wettest in history. In many areas, turning cows out to grass still feels a very distant prospect. In some parts of the country however, it will be very welcomed, as many farmers are short of forage and will be praying for an early spring.

In fact, some are planning to turn out dairy cows for the first time in a lot of years. This may well be a serious consideration for many farms this year given the challenging weather and winter.

With forage stocks running low, straw both expensive and in short supply, and milk prices under pressure, more farmers will be looking to maximise milk from grass.

To ensure that turnout goes smoothly, it is essential to forward plan to help maximise grass dry matter intakes. At turnout, milk yields may rise or fall for a few days; this is expected as the cows are changing a substantial proportion of their dry matter intake from conserved forage to fresh forage. A gradual transition to grazing over a short period will, of course, help minimise fluctuations in milk output. To minimise the effect on milk output, ensure that the grass is at its optimum for grazing.

Points to consider before turnout and maintenance work

- Ground conditions
- Ensure all winter grazing sheep are moved in plenty of time from the grazing and silage ground
- Which stock are you turning out? (all cows or just low yielders)
- Grass covers
- Compound feed requirements
- Fertiliser requirements
- Stock fencing
- Gates and gateways
- Electric fencing
- Tracks and roadways
- Water supply and troughs

Which fields are to be grazed first?

Ground and weather conditions will have a massive impact on the timing. Turning cows out onto wet ground will do more harm than good. Gateways and tracks will soon become torn up. Once poached and rain continues, it's very slow to dry again, care should be taken in deciding paddock rotation.

Ideally, grazing should start on paddocks that have been closed and left to rest or when average grass cover is 1900-2000kg dry matter per hectare. Cows should be moved to fresh pasture when the field cover has been reduced to 1500kg dry matter per hectare. This will maximise

intakes in terms of quality and utilisation. The first field is to be re-grazed once all other paddocks/fields have been grazed, which ideally should be around 21 days later. The aim is for this field to have re-grown to a target grass height of around 2800kg dry matter per hectare in that time.

Water troughs

Water is a major and essential nutrient for all animals. A dairy cow may drink up to 100 litres per day, typically requiring around four litres of water for every litre of milk produced. A constant supply of clean water is crucial to achieving consistent milk production and maintaining healthy animals. Cows should walk no further than 250 metres to the nearest trough.

Turnout tips

- Initially, graze cows for a limited period and increase gradually over time as grazing conditions and grass cover permit.
- To encourage maximum intakes, graze young, leafy swards.
- Turn cows onto fresh pasture after evening milking; this has the potential to raise daily milk production by 5%.
- To maximise intakes, avoid grazing paddocks for more than three consecutive days.
- Ideally, cows should be moved to fresh pasture each day.
- Use back fencing to protect pasture re-growth.
- Productive swards should have a minimum 65% live leaf content.
- Weekly monitoring of field grass covers will allow surplus or shortfalls in grass to be addressed quickly.
- Target ryegrass content 70% or more.

Top feeding tips

- Reformulate blends and compounds to allow for moving from silage onto a lower NDF, higher protein grazed grass.
- Don't remove compound feed from cows too quickly and expect too much from grazed grass.
- Supplement with forage or moist feed to bridge any gaps in DMI.
- Provide sufficient minerals, in particular Magnesium.
- Monitor milk constituents, adjusting diet to maintain butterfat, protein and milk urea.



Feeding For Success this Summer

NWF Blends: Driving flexible performance from day one

Grass can be a very cost-effective feed as it is a good source of rumen degradable protein, has highly fermentable carbohydrates and sugars, therefore making the most of it can not only help the bottom line but maintain animal performance.

Grass has high levels of oil which can “coat” the fibre in the diet, decrease acetate production and subsequently reduce butterfats. It is also low in structural fibre and high in fermentable sugars, which can result in a drop in rumen pH, increasing the risk of acidosis. Consistency is also another challenge, in both quality and intakes. Moisture, ground conditions and overall grassland management will all influence this. To maximise grazing performance, NWF Agriculture offer a range of summer dairy diets to suit all systems.

One of the core range of diets available from NWF is ‘Fusion’ which contain no Soya, Soya Hulls or Palm Kernel. This range is formulated to a lower Co2 equivalent, utilising British grown raw materials where possible.

The NWF Fusion Dairy feed range uses **Ultra Pro-R** and **Ultra Starch-W** as a more sustainable alternative to soya and maize.

The use of blends in feeding systems can offer significant benefits when looking to feed livestock a nutritionally balanced, cost-effective diet whilst reducing the overall cost. NWF Agriculture can formulate specific blends making use of a wide variety of top quality raw materials, sourced from around the world which are then accurately blended together at our strategically located UFAS approved production sites.

- ✓ Soya
- ✓ Rapemeal
- ✓ Distillers
- ✓ Sugarbeet
- ✓ Soya Hulls
- ✓ Maize
- ✓ Wheat
- ✓ Barley
- ✓ Maize Sugar
- ✓ Wheatfeed
- ✓ PK
- ✓ Molasses
- ✓ Supplements

**BESPOKE BLENDS
MADE YOUR WAY**



High fibre diets to promote rumen function and drive butterfats.

High fibre diets to balance high starch/low fibre diets.

High quality starch diets to drive recovery from negative energy balance, fertility and yields.

High starch diets with good energy levels designed to balance fibrous forages.

A high quality, cost-effective diet range designed to support milk yields and complement forages.

A range of blends are available with carefully balanced protein and energy levels to support milk yields, energy, rumen health and fibre digestion.

Contact your NWF Sales Specialist for more information about our range

Improving Feed Efficiency with NWF Protected Feeds

by Su Mills, NWF Feeds Commodities Trader



For modern dairy farmers, performance and profitability depend on one crucial factor: feed efficiency. With volatile milk prices, unpredictable weather and increasing pressure to improve sustainability, getting the most from every tonne of feed has never mattered more.

At its core, Protected Feed technology is about precision nutrition. By protecting key nutrients from degradation in the rumen, more of those nutrients bypass to the small intestine where they are absorbed and used efficiently by the cow. The result is improved milk yield, better milk constituents and more efficient nitrogen utilisation.

Unlike standard rations, where a proportion of protein is lost during rumen fermentation, NWF's Protected Feeds ensure a higher proportion of digestible undegradable protein (DUP) reaches the cow's system intact. This supports higher-yielding cows, optimises peak performance, and helps maintain body condition during early lactation when nutritional demand is greatest.

Improved milk performance is one of the most immediate benefits producers report with many farmers seeing gains in milk litres and improvements in butterfat and protein percentages.

There is also a strong sustainability case. Better nitrogen efficiency means less excess nitrogen is excreted, supporting lower environmental impact and helping farms move toward tighter nutrient management targets. With increasing scrutiny on emissions and nutrient losses, feeding strategies that improve utilisation are becoming essential rather than optional.

Another key advantage is ration flexibility. Protected proteins allow nutritionists to reduce overall crude protein levels in the diet without compromising performance. This can lower feed costs, while still delivering the nutrients cows need for optimum production.

Seasonal Drivers of Bypass Nutrient Requirements

During spring, fresh grazing is typically high in rumen-degradable protein and, although this meets the needs of the rumen microbes, it does not supply sufficient bypass protein to sustain high levels of milk production. Whilst grazing, your herd may consume large amounts of rumen available protein, yet receive too little digestible undegradable protein to meet the higher demands of early lactation.

Increasing crude protein intake to compensate is not an effective strategy. It is costly, increases nitrogen excretion and can push cows further into negative energy balance due to the metabolic cost of processing excess nitrogen. Feeding lower levels of rumen degradable protein while increasing the proportion of bypass protein provides a more efficient approach, supplying more metabolisable protein without the negative effects of a high crude protein diet.

A similar principle applies to rumen energy supply. Fermentable carbohydrates are necessary for the formation of rumen bacteria, too much quickly fermentable starch raises the danger of

acidosis, especially when mixed with the high sugar content of spring grass. To boost intakes while preserving rumen stability, protected starch sources like **Ultra Starch-W** decrease the quantity of starch that ferments in the rumen and increases the amount available to the hindgut.

Practical Application this Spring

Spring grass contains rapidly fermentable sugars which can place pressure on rumen pH and reduce the efficiency of fibre digestion. Including rapidly fermentable cereals such as wheat or barley can increase this pressure further. **Ultra Starch-W** offers an alternative by providing a higher level of hindgut digestible starch than untreated wheat. This reduces rumen fermentation load and improves total energy utilisation when grazing quality and dry matter intakes vary.

Bypass Protein

Ultra Pro-R and **Ultra Soy** support metabolisable protein supply at times when microbial protein synthesis becomes limiting. The highly digestible bypass protein content improves amino acid flow to the small intestine and supports:

- Improved peak yields.
- Reduced nitrogen wastage.
- Better fertility performance through reduced negative energy balance.

Bypass Starch

Ultra Starch-W improves energy supply during periods of fluctuating forage quality, especially in spring when rumen pH stability is more difficult to manage.

As forage quality improves through spring and summer, rumen degradable protein and fermentable carbohydrate often exceed the rumen's optimum working range. Under these conditions the limiting nutrients for performance shift from rumen degradable supply to bypass protein and bypass starch.

Your local NWF sales specialist will work with you to tailor rations to your herds goals, whether its maximising peak yields, improving fertility, maintaining condition or driving margin over feed cost.

Ultra Pro-R, **Ultra Soy** and **Ultra Starch-W** provide consistent, predictable post rumen nutrient delivery that supports high lactation performance, improves nutrient utilisation and helps manage environmental outputs throughout the spring and summer periods.

For further information on NWF protected feeds, please contact your local NWF Sales Specialist or call Rupert Stafford or Su Mills on 01829 262270.



Driving Performance on Robots with NWF

by Michael Tennick, NWF Blends Development Manager



Ridgend Farm in Worcestershire covers 900 acres of owned and rented land and is run by Dave Richards, who milks 500 Holsteins. The farm has been built over three generations of the Richards family, moving from a tenanted holding in 1981, to a structured, efficient dairy unit operating today. With two full-time staff alongside Dave and his son Jim, the focus is firmly on consistency, cow health and a feeding system designed to maximise performance.

A key part of the herd's success is the use of straights and a well-balanced robotic feeding system, supported by **NWF Ultra Robot 17**. Each year they produce multi-cut grass silage and chopped maize, these forages act as the background to a system where precision feeding through the robots driving most of the performance. Dave places strong emphasis on ensuring cows receive the right nutrition at the robot, with the feed acting as the main lever for improving yield, cow flow and overall efficiency.

The farm has eight GEA R9500 robots operating on a free access system. Although each one can milk around 75 cows, Dave aims for 52 to 55 cows per robot, this approach keeps the system running smoothly and encourages consistent voluntary visits. After switching to NWF Ultra Robot 17, cows now average around 5 kilograms per day through the robots, with the highest yielders receiving up to 8 kilograms. Since making the change, yields have increased from **35 litres** to more than **38 litres per cow per day**. Daily robot visits have also risen from 2.7 to just over 3 per cow, and Dave notes that the palatability of the feed has played a major role in driving this improvement. Milk constituents sit at 3.6 percent protein and 4.3 percent butterfat.



Jim and Dave Richards

The herd has also benefited from moving from a full TMR to a PMR. This has improved the body condition of later lactation cows and works well alongside the precision feeding through the robots. The balance between PMR and robotic concentrates helps maintain consistent intakes without overfeeding, while still supporting high yielders.

Cow health is managed proactively. A professional foot trimmer visits every three weeks, which has reduced lameness significantly. In a robotic system, this is essential, as cows are far more willing to walk to the robots and maintain regular milking visits. Along with reduced mastitis levels following the move to robots, the farm has seen a clear reduction in antibiotic use.

Breeding is carried out on the farm, with all staff trained and qualified in AI. The top 60 percent of cows receive sexed semen to produce replacements, while the rest are served to Angus for easy calving and strong calf growth rates. This structured approach has helped maintain a calving index of around 380 days. *"Since the addition of the robots, we've been looking more into genetics and how our breeding plan aligns. We're looking for straight udder and teat placements to help the robots attach, occasionally the robot can miss udders on particularly tall cows or those with crossed teat", says Dave.*

Dave values the ongoing support from NWF Agriculture, particularly through ration planning, nutrition advice and forage analysis. This helps keep the system aligned with the needs of the herd as conditions change.

The combination of utilising straights including **NWF Ultra Pro-R**, precision robot feeding, and a proactive approach to health and management has shaped Ridgend Farm into a high performing, efficient unit. Improvements in yields, cow flow and overall herd health highlight how a well-targeted feeding strategy, supported by good stockmanship and technical support can bring reliable results.

NWF Agriculture would like to thank the Richards family for their continued business and wish them all the best.

For further information on maximising milk yields through robotic milking systems, please contact your local NWF Sales Specialist.



Downer Cow Care

by Caroline Perry,
Veterinary Surgeon, Synergy Farm Health



It doesn't matter how good a farm; no-one escapes the odd downer cow.

As vets, we probably only see a fraction of the cases that occur so we might not get the chance to discuss their care. As an industry we know they are tricky, time consuming and stressful to deal with. Synergy have committed resource to develop a training webinar on Downer cow care. Some of the main messages are:

Move the down cow quickly to a deeply bedded nursing area.

This should be top priority to prevent further injury and muscle damage.

Get a diagnosis as soon as possible and get treatment started.

Include pain relief in your treatment plan. The sooner a cow is treated for the initial cause, the quicker you can try to get her standing. This prevents secondary injuries and the dreaded muscle damage caused by the cow's body weight stopping blood flow to her limbs.

Nursing care

Regular checks and regularly refreshing food and water. An Australian study showed how much impact on-going nursing can have on outcomes – with the best care 33% of downer cows recovered after 7 days compared to 0% in those receiving the worst care. The final outcome was a 45% recovery rate for downer cows receiving the best care and, you've guessed it, 0% recovering with the poorer quality nursing care.

Which brings us onto:

Assessing Welfare

Because of the time consuming nature and ~ 45% recovery rate, step back and assess if you have the time available to care for these cases. It is better to opt for euthanasia early if it is in the best interest of the cow.

Lifting Cows as Part of Nursing Care

Hip hoists are commonly used to lift cows into standing.

Firstly let's acknowledge they are not ideal: they can cause injury to both the cow and you. But they are present on most farms so let's improve how we use them as an industry.



Top tips:

LIFT not MOVE. It's very important that we don't use hip hoists to move cows any distance. If cow requires moving (e.g. to a hospital pen), their body should be supported in a handler bucket or sling/net.

Keep the hoist clean and well maintained – so you aren't cranking rust! And can adequately tighten and loosen them.

Tightened to prevent the hip bone slipping out and cow falling - this could cause more injury to the cow and catch people.

Use a halter – it gives stability to help the cow up, encourage her, and stop her charging off still attached to the hoist.

Support for farms

Synergy Farm Health have collaborated with dairy farmer James Yeatman to develop CowRecovery™ – our award winning system to move down cow in a



safe and effective manner. The system fits on any loader and can be operated by one person. CowRecovery™ has received considerable interest from the wider dairy industry and won the award for 'Dairy Innovation' at the 2025 Cream Awards.

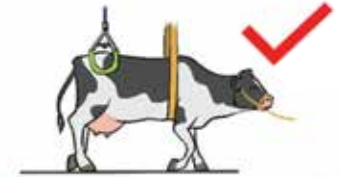
The Downer Cow Course has arrived on our online training site

- Synergy Farm Training. This has been created by our vets to help equip those on farm on how to best care for their downer cow. With our bite sized training modules, and multiple user dashboard, Synergy Farm Training is aimed at those who need training to fit around the busy farming life.

www.
synergyfarmtraining.
com



DON'T lift the hip hoist past the point that her hooves should touch the ground. This is putting huge pressure on the hip bones and surrounding muscles causing excessive bruising. It pushes the huge weight of the rumen and gut contents into the diaphragm affecting breathing.



DO use a girth strap! Either a wide webbing strap (as wide and soft as you can get) or a dumpy bag. It will take a bit of balancing to get two strap heights correct but is much more supportive of the front-end body weight. These cows often have 'pins and needles' so can struggle to place their front feet. This helps give stability to the front feet and encourages the cow to feel she can stand.



Moist feeds...Expensive dry matter or the missing link to high yield & efficiency?

by Joel Wade, NWF Feed Commodities Trader



In Spring 2025, we opened our state-of-the-art moist feeds production site at our Aspatria Mill in Cumbria, supplying high-quality moist feeds across the country, delivering to farms across the UK.

The traditional moist byproducts of old, brewers grains, draff and pressed pulp, to name a few all offer an attractive price per tonne when tipped on farm. However, the actual cost of the energy contents, protein or even dry matter per tonne or kilogram is often thrown around and can become quite misleading. This, combined with relentless availability issues have led traditional users to explore a new offering to the market.

What is Brayton Gold?

Manufactured, not a byproduct.

Every load is made to order, it is not sitting in a feed bay. Brayton Gold is manufactured for each order, ensuring maximum freshness, shelf life, and nutritional value. One of the biggest challenges with traditional moist byproducts is inconsistency. Variations in dry matter, nutrient density and supply can make rationing difficult and often force nutritionists to chase performance with additional bought in ingredients. When cows receive a ration that changes subtly from day to day, intakes can fluctuate, sorting increases and rumen fermentation becomes less stable, all of which have knock on effects on milk output and components.

Specifically Formulated

It is not like traditional byproducts from other industries. Brayton Gold is manufactured to a fixed specification, every load arrives with the same dry matter and nutrient profile. This predictability allows your NWF Sales Specialist to formulate rations with far greater accuracy, meaning the ration mixed in the wagon is the ration cows consume. A more consistent ration supports steadier rumen function, improved utilisation of nutrients and more efficient milk production.

Incredibly Stable

With a food-grade preservative formulated and blended into the feed, on-farm shelf life is greatly increased, along with improving its stored shelf life.

One of the biggest frustrations with traditional moist feeds is their unpredictable shelf life. Loads that look fine when tipped can deteriorate rapidly, especially in warm weather, leading to heating and spoilage. This is where Brayton Gold stands out.

Feeding Brayton Gold

Balanced nutrition is the foundation of productive, healthy and profitable livestock, whether milking cows, growing beef or fattening lambs. This all begins with intakes: how much are they eating, and can I get them to eat more? With homegrown forage being the base for the vast majority of diets, how can we entice the animals to stretch and increase intake levels? Brayton

Gold. "We've always had pretty good silage, but I can't believe how the cows go at the silage since the addition of Brayton Gold in the TMR", commented one Cheshire-based dairy farmer.

With distillery syrups being one of the main raw materials, the palatability of any feed is increased significantly when Brayton Gold is formulated into a ration. Further to this, the syrups promote better fibre digestion and nutrient absorption by enhancing microbial activity in the rumen. With this, animals can extract more usable energy and protein from forages within TMR diets.

So, on the back of more intake of home-grown forage and extracting more of its value, we see an increase in DLWG, an increase in milk yield and an improvement in milk components. The inclusion of both degradable and undegradable protein sources also helps optimise nitrogen utilisation and supports amino acid supply to the small intestine, improving milk solids and overall cow fertility markers.

With milk prices looking less favourable in recent times, dairy farmers are looking to produce more from less, hence increasing the value of every litre by pushing for butterfat and protein value must be considered. Go in the drawer, pull out the milk price payment schedule and check, can you maximise your price per litre? Are you taking advantage of component bonuses?

For further information on feed Brayton Gold or to book your first load, speak to your local NWF Sales Specialist.

NWF Agriculture is your chosen manufacturer of Moist Feeds in the UK



NWF Brayton Gold

Designed to replace forage and drive yields.

- High Protein
- High Energy
- Highly Palatable

Contains:

- NWF Ultra Pro-R
- Sugarbeet
- Feed-Grade Preservative

"We've always had pretty good silage, but I can't believe how the cows go at the silage since the addition of Brayton Gold in the TMR"

Going for Gold with NWF Agriculture

by George Franks, NWF National Sales Director



As an industry that utilises by-products to produce food for a growing population, the agricultural sector already has strong sustainable credentials. Every stakeholder has a role to play in further improving agriculture's position.

As sustainability standards tighten across UK agriculture, the Tesco Sustainable Dairy Group (TSDG) has clarified soya sourcing requirements. From 1 March 2026, all soya used on TSDG dairy farms must comply with a new Gold, Silver, and Bronze hierarchy, and Müller urges suppliers to achieve Gold wherever possible.

Gold is classed as a low risk origin, carrying the lowest likelihood of any link to deforestation. For many dairy farmers, it raises a familiar question: *How do we stay compliant without adding cost, confusion, or risk to the business?*

Fully Gold Standard as Default

All soya used in the NWF Agriculture compound feed range is sourced exclusively from North America, a region classified as "low risk origin" within the TSDG framework. That places every NWF dairy customer directly into the Gold tier without needing to change a thing.

Our raw material sourcing approach means:

- Our soya meets the low risk origin requirement.
- It qualifies as vDCF under the updated definition.
- We can provide the import paperwork and attribution evidence needed for Müller audits.

A Ruminant-Only Mill for Added Assurance

An often-overlooked area in sustainability discussions is our three UFAS-approved mills. NWF Agriculture operates the only compound mill in the UK dedicated solely to ruminant feed. That might sound like a technicality, but the benefits are significant.

In essence, it means we don't produce monogastric feeds and therefore don't bring alternative soya materials into any of our production sites. This helps with:

1. Zero cross contamination risk from non-compliant soya.
2. A single, consistent soya stream that always meets Gold Standard requirements.
3. Simple, clean evidence for farm assurance visits and Müller's carbon reporting.

In short, NWF feed is traceable, compliant and consistent every time in line with Gold standards.

Helping Farmers Meet Their Sustainability and Contract Obligations

As expectations around sustainable raw materials tighten, we know farmers need feed options that tick the environmental boxes without compromising performance. NWF Gold and Fusion dairy feed ranges have been formulated with that in mind: high quality formulations, competitive pricing, and no complexity when it comes to meeting TSDG sustainability rules.

NWF Gold and Fusion Range is formulated for high performing herds

The NWF Fusion Range is a soya-free and soya-hull-free compound feed range, offering farmers a high-performing compound that meets sustainability criteria. The NWF Gold range is either soya-free or contains North American soya (Gold standard).

Paired with its sustainability credentials, it gives TSDG suppliers a reliable route to staying compliant while keeping cows performing at their best.

Fusion Range	Gold Range
<p>Fusion Pro</p> <p>A high-performance ration that contains high levels of Ultra Pro-R and Ultra Starch W to ensure high levels of bypass protein and starch to support high performing cows.</p>	<p>Gold Standard</p> <p>This carefully balanced, soya free maize based diet also benefits from a range of starch and fibre sources making it an especially suitable grazing diet. Its high levels of digestible fibre aid rumen function and its range of energy and protein sources including Ultra Pro-R, boost performance.</p>
<p>Dairy Fusion</p> <p>A high energy feed with good glucogenic nutrients to support milk production and early lactation. Available in a range of proteins.</p>	<p>Gold Stellar</p> <p>This high energy, soya free, maize based compound benefits from a range of starch sources giving an exceptional degradation profile. The combination of protein sources including Ultra Pro-R, give a high DUP to boost yield and performance.</p>
<p>Fusion Blends</p> <p>Bespoke blends can be formulated to optimise homegrown forage and feeds, without the use of soya, soya hulls and palm kernel.</p>	<p>Gold Star</p> <p>A very high energy maize based compound which boosts blood glucose levels for optimal milk production. Generous levels of sugar beet give digestible fibre for rumen function and inclusions of Hi pro soya and protected proteins (Ultra Pro-R and Ultra Soy) give an exceptional amino acid profile.</p>

For further information on the NWF compound feeds, please speak to your local NWF Sales Specialist.



Managing Mineral Challenges this Spring

by Sue Cowell, NWF Traded Product Manager



Lush spring pasture presents challenges because its high-water content, elevated rumen-degradable protein (RDP), rapidly fermentable carbohydrates and excess non-protein nitrogen accelerate rumen fermentation rates and disrupt normal rumen function. This abrupt shift from winter forage to highly soluble spring grass alters rumen pH, destabilises microbial populations and increases the risk of subacute ruminal acidosis (SARA), bloat and digestive disturbance. The rapid release of ammonia from RDP can exceed the capacity of rumen microbes to utilise it for microbial protein synthesis, increasing blood urea levels and placing additional strain on the liver.

At the same time, spring grass is typically high in potassium but low in essential minerals such as magnesium, sodium and calcium. Elevated potassium interferes with magnesium absorption across the rumen wall by reducing the electrical gradient required for passive uptake, predisposing stock to metabolic mineral imbalances, including hypomagnesaemia ('grass staggers'), while the high nitrogen content can further contribute to digestive upset and metabolic stress.

Early spring pasture also contains lower concentrations of structural fibre (NDF), which reduces rumen fill and speeds up passage rate. This limits the time available for mineral absorption and can reduce total dry-matter intake. Rapid rumen turnover also increases reliance on highly available mineral sources to prevent shortfalls during peak metabolic demand.

Low magnesium can lead to fatal 'grass staggers' in lactating cattle, often resulting in death if not managed correctly. There should be a consistent intake of a high-magnesium supplement (10–14% Mg) especially during the first six weeks post calving, such as Mag Chloride Flakes in water troughs (remove all other sources of water), Cal Mag (Magnesium Oxide) added into the feed, or a well-balanced powdered mineral or lick/feed stress by depressing fibre digestion and reducing rumination time.

High iron in the soil or in silage can act as an antagonist, tying up copper and cobalt, leading to ill-thrift and anaemia. Molybdenum and sulphur can compound this effect by forming thiomolybdates, which bind copper in the rumen and bloodstream. Rapid growth can also increase iodine requirement, which is necessary for energy utilisation and thermoregulation. Good spring grass is high in PUFAs (polyunsaturated fatty acids), which can increase the need for extra selenium and Vitamin E to prevent oxidative stress and reduce the risk of white muscle disease in youngstock.

In addition to mineral imbalances, the transition to spring grass coincides with a marked increase in metabolic demand as cows shift from winter maintenance to peak production. This sudden rise in energy requirement places greater pressure on liver function, particularly for gluconeogenesis and mobilisation of body fat reserves.

If not supported nutritionally, this can increase the risk of ketosis and fatty-liver development during early lactation. Furthermore, rapidly growing grass often contains lower levels of functional fibre, which reduces cud-chewing activity and saliva buffering, making the rumen more vulnerable to acid load and microbial disruption. These changes can impair fibre-digesting bacteria, reduce feed efficiency and compromise overall nutrient utilisation.

Adequate levels of trace elements such as zinc, manganese and selenium are essential at this stage to maintain epithelial integrity, support antioxidant systems and ensure efficient immune function. Targeted supplementation helps stabilise rumen conditions and supports performance throughout this high-risk period.

Spring is peak lactation for many, and the high output of milk drains the mother's mineral stores. Calves are growing rapidly and require high levels of copper, cobalt and selenium for muscle development, immunity and avoiding 'growth checks'. Spring can also be a high-stress period on the immune system, making the herd more susceptible to mastitis, uterine infections and retained placentas. Ensuring adequate trace mineral intake supports antioxidant defences and helps maintain reproductive performance during this demanding period.

Getting the balance of minerals correct in the spring can be tricky but getting it right now will ensure that dairy cows and youngstock are fit, healthy, productive and well-prepared for the growing season ahead. NWF Agriculture supplies a comprehensive range of high-quality products formulated to help you through this time, including in-feed or free access minerals and buckets or magnesium supplements.

NWF High Mag Mineral Bucket

Reduce the risk of staggers (Hypomagnesemia) in lactating cattle

- High magnesium mineral lick containing three sources of magnesium to offer protection against staggers during spring and autumn months.
- A combination of quickly available and slow releasing magnesium sources to protect livestock 24 hours a day.
- Vitamin D3 to aid in the absorption of calcium, helping to prevent milk fever.
- A balanced range of trace elements and vitamins to address the deficiencies often seen in spring and autumn grass.



Available in
20kg and 80kg tubs

Typical intakes cattle 200g head/day

**Suitable for mixed grazing*

Don't overcomplicate your dry cow system

by Adam Clay, NWF Operations and Technical Director



Let's keep it simple: a dry cow period should be 50–60 days long. This 7–8-week window allows the mammary gland to repair, the rumen to recover, and the cow to build up body reserves for the next lactation. If it's too short, we increase the risk of udder health issues, and cows may struggle to reach peak yield. Too long and cows may get overweight, causing severe metabolic issues.

Poor feeding and management during the transition period can result in a host of problems around calving, such as dystocia (difficult calving), retained placenta, milk fever (hypocalcaemia), rapid weight loss, ketosis and even lameness and mastitis. Many of these issues are related, as one may lead to the manifestation of the other conditions, often as a result of reduced feed intakes.

Maximising dry matter intakes post calving must be a key outcome from a transition system. Having a high intake post-calving will not only help to minimise negative energy balance, but also help both production and fertility. It can take until 10 weeks post-calving before cows reach peak intake. Cows will peak in milk yield at approximately 6 – 8 weeks post-calving, further increasing negative energy balance and weight loss. Whilst feed quality and management are key components to this, animal health should also be considered a first limiting factor.

For example, when a cow experiences a case of milk fever, she is then far more likely to experience ketosis (negative energy balance), displaced abomasum (twisted stomach), retained cleansings and even higher cell counts. The same can also be said for sub-clinical milk fever, which, by its nature, is very difficult to see and treat, but can have a similar effect and so must not be ignored.

Milk fever is considered a gateway disease; data from trial herds shows the hidden danger of subclinical milk fever, even when clinical milk fever levels may be considered 'low'.

So, what are the key points to focus on:

Body Condition Score

An ideal calving condition score is 3 – 3.25; calving thinner will reduce lactation and peak yield, calving overweight will reduce early dry matter intakes and increase chances of milk fever and ketosis. For cows calving overweight, have post-calving drenches available for the inevitable issues.

Nutrition

High dry matter intakes will help to keep the rumen expanded and drive intakes post calving, but high energy intakes will drive weight gain, which is dangerous. Therefore, forage should be clean, fresh and palatable but low in energy, that's where chopped straw can be a useful tool. If straw is used, it must be chopped to enable intakes of 3-5 kg.

Minerals

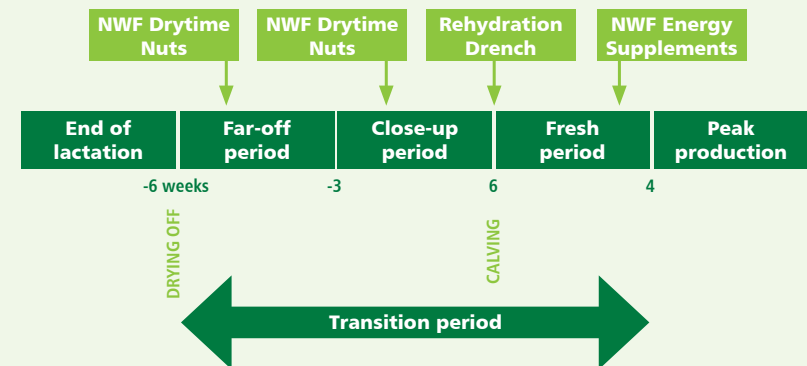
Potassium is generally high in green forage (grass, grass silage and hay) but low in cereal silage. Higher potassium in dry cow diets will increase milk fever due to its relationship with magnesium and calcium. Reducing potassium should be the first job, after this, feed magnesium through magnesium chloride flakes and/or dry cow minerals, as this will counteract the potassium in the diet.

DCAB (Dietary Cation Anion Balance) products may also be required, such as introducing NWF Drytime Rolls. A compound feed to balance both high straw and high silage dry cow diets, helping achieve maximum returns.

Monitor and React

Speak to your NWF Sales Specialist as soon as symptoms show, as small changes can have big effects. For example, a change of silage could shift the potassium levels, if retained cleansings increase, this can be a sign of subclinical milk fever, so increasing magnesium can help. Low colostrum levels could be lower starch in the close-up group or an impact of milk fever. Reacting to such symptoms could pay dividends through lactation.

A simple, well-balanced dry cow system builds the foundations for strong early lactation performance and long-term herd health. For further information on maximising dry cow performance and future yields, please speak to your local NWF Sales Specialist.



Prepare to make quality silage this season

by Mike Burns, Regional Business Manager, Lallemand Animal Nutrition



LALLEMAND ANIMAL NUTRITION

Have an early-season review

Meet early in the year with your contractor – or farm team if silage is made in-house. alongside your NWF Sales Specialist.

Review what worked well last year and what didn't, and plan accordingly with the silage-making team. Make sure to order your oxygen barrier plastic and inoculant needs early, to benefit from any early season offers and be ready for the season.

Carry out pre-cut grass testing

Pre-cut grass testing, using the NWF laboratory, gives you an indication of the growth stage of the grass.

It is also used to make sure the grass has used up the nitrogen applied, and the sugar levels are high enough to guarantee a good fermentation.

Test the grass before your expected first cut date, at the height you'll be cutting it for silage.

Optimise cut height & length

Don't cut the grass too low because you'll get a slower regrowth and there isn't much feed value in the very bottom of the plant.

Aim for a cut height of 6-8cm; if the fields look white after you've mowed them, you know you've gone too low. Leave a green tinge to them, so the re-growth is quicker.

The optimal chop length depends on the grass condition – wet grass needs a longer chop length, but dry grass needs a shorter chop of below 2cm. This will make it easier to roll and compact.

Use an inoculant

Using a silage inoculant, from the NWF Ultra-Guard range, helps ensure the right bacteria dominate the fermentation – namely lactic acid bacteria (LAB).

The faster the fermentation, the better it preserves dry matter and nutrients, reducing waste and improving palatability.

Relying solely on naturally occurring LAB in the crop can buffer fermentation, making it slower and less efficient, increasing the risk of moulds and spoilage yeasts. Consider which inoculant is best suited for the challenges you're going to face when you're ensiling and at feed-out.

Choosing the correct inoculant will make sure the bacteria combination is the right match for conditions at harvest.

Look out for enzyme technology in an inoculant – this helps ensure good fermentation in challenging conditions. Improving silage digestibility and promotes the activity of 'good' microbes for faster, more efficient fermentation.

Clamp carefully

If you're putting multiple cuts in the same clamp, make sure you spread grass out across the whole clamp in layers.

This means when you're feeding from the top to the bottom of the clamp in a day, the cows will get a good mix of everything that's there.

When compacting it, make sure you're rolling it all the time and as a rough rule of thumb the machines compacting need to weigh 25% of the weight of the forage coming in per hour – so 25 tonnes if you're harvesting 100 tonnes of grass an hour.

After compacting, carefully seal the clamp with a high oxygen barrier plastic, paying attention to edges and corners. Preventing oxygen ingress will help the fermentation process and preserve your investment in forage.

For information on the NWF forage analysis service and silage inoculant range contact your local NWF Sales Specialist or call 0800 756 2787.



NWF Technical Services to support your farm

NWF Agriculture provides a comprehensive range of services to maximise milk yields, herd health, DLWG, flock health and more.

- Dairy Costings
- Beef Costings
- Ration Planning
- Diet & Dung Sieving
- Mineral and Soil Analysis
- Cow and Calf Signals
- Dry Cow Check
- Body Condition Scoring
- Mobility Scoring
- Forage Analysis



The NWF laboratory processes over 9,000 silage samples a year. Providing accurate analysis of fresh grass, silage and haylage.



Visit the NWF Trade Stand and meet your local NWF Sales Specialist at the following shows:

- UK Dairy Expo - Saturday 14th March
- Royal Cornwall Show - Thursday 4th to Saturday 6th June
- Nantwich Show - Wednesday 29th July
- Garstang Show - Saturday 1st August
- North Devon Show - Wednesday 5th August
- Minsterley Show - Saturday 15th August
- Westmorland Show - Wednesday 9th and Thursday 10th September
- UK Dairy Day - Wednesday 16th September
- The Dairy Show - Wednesday 7th October
- Brailsford Ploughing Match - Wednesday 7th October
- Borderway Agri Expo - Friday 30th October
- AgriScot - Wednesday 18th November



"I'm proud of the progress we're making at NWF Agriculture in strengthening support for farmers during a period of challenge and change. Over the past few months, I've spent a great deal of time meeting customers across the country, understanding their priorities, and ensuring our teams continue to deliver consistent feed quality, reliable service, and practical technical advice. We are also investing in innovation and responsible sourcing as part of our commitment to sustainable British agriculture, helping British farmers improve productivity while reducing environmental impact."

Rob Warrington, NWF Agriculture Managing Director



www.nwfagriculture.co.uk

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