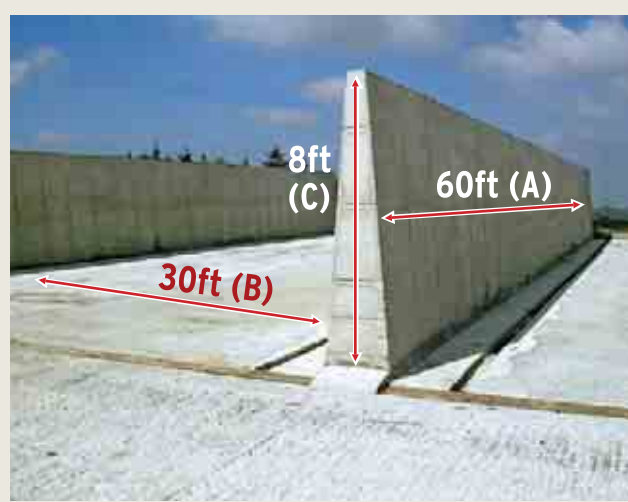




The amount of fodder required will depend on the size of the animal being fed and the level of concentrates being offered



To calculate the tonnage of grass silage in the pit, multiply Length (A) x Breadth (B) x Height (C) and divide by 45

drain on fodder supplies — heavy continental cows can consume in excess of 45kg of grass silage per day. The first step in reducing this is to condition score the spring-calving herd and identify the over fat cows, e.g. cows with a BCS of over 2.5.

You can restrict the level of

silage being fed to these cows by 7kg to 10kg per day and allow them to drop back in condition. You also have the option to eliminate silage completely from the diet of the spring-calving cow by offering straw ad-lib along with 2.5kg of a 16% protein ration. I have no preference

over wheat or barley straw, but it is essential that the bales are neither mouldy nor matted together — this is a major problem this year as a consequence of the wet autumn. If you do go down the straw route, make sure to feed a high phosphorous mineral at a rate of 100 grams per head per day. Another option would be to reduce silage back to 20kg per head per day and feed 2.5kg to 3.5kg per day of a standard beef mix. If restricting silage to a freshly calved cow to 20kg per day, you will need to increase meal levels up to 5kg per day. If silage is being restricted, you must ensure you have adequate feed space for all cows to eat at once. Otherwise the shy feeders will just get thinner or even hurt.

amount of silage being fed to weanlings to 10kg per day by feeding 2.5kg of meal. However, performance will be reduced back to 0.2kg to 0.3kg of gain per day.

If you intend to sell animals in the spring, you would want to increase meal feeding levels up to 4kg per day to maintain performance at 0.5kg. You can reduce the amount of silage being fed to store bullocks to 15kg to 20kg per day by introducing 3kg of meal per day. However, performance will again be limited to 0.2kg to 0.3kg of gain per day.



6

REDUCING SILAGE FOR WEANLINGS / STORES

It is possible to reduce the



7

GETTING OUT TO GRASS EARLY

Don't forget that one way to solve your silage problem is to try and get cattle out to grass early next spring. With poor weather conditions having forced ground to be closed up early in the autumn, grass covers next spring will be

heavier than normal. Giving growth a kick start in the spring by spreading early Nitrogen is undoubtedly one of the cheapest ways of producing additional fodder on the farm. Getting 30 cows out to grass two weeks earlier than normal will reduce your silage requirement by 20 tonnes.



8

SELLING STOCK

If you intend to sell stock next spring, then bringing forward the sale date will reduce your silage requirement.

However, you should avoid getting into the position where you have to sell stock that traditionally would have been grazed through the summer.

Selling these animals will significantly reduce farm output and can make grassland management in the spring exceptionally difficult.

The last position you want to find yourself in is where you are forced to sell stock in February and then have to buy back in again in April.



9

GET RID OF THE FREE LOADERS

Irrespective of fodder supplies, it is still good practice not to be carrying any free-

loaders over the high cost winter period. Make sure and scan the spring-calving herd to identify any empty cows.

These cows should either be fed for culling or sold immediately in the mart. You should also make sure to sell cattle as soon as they become fit for slaughter.

Pumping silage into cattle that are already at fat class 4L is simply a waste of what is a valuable resource.



10

BUY THE RIGHT RATION

If you do go down the route of buying a ration to either feed to cows or weanlings, make sure and keep it simple. At a feeding level of 2kg to 3kg per day, the bulk of the ration can be made up of rolled barley.

A 90% rolled barley 10% soya bean meal mix is adequate for cows, stores and weanlings if you continue to feed silage and meals at a rate of 2kg to 3kg per day.

If you are feeding straw instead of silage, you need to increase the protein content, so drop the rolled barley back to 85% and increase soya to 15%.

In the case of feeding meals ad-lib to finishing cattle, a three way mix of rolled barley/wheat, soya hulls/ citrus and soya/distillers would be adequate.

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