

Solohead Research Farm 2009

Current Production Performance (23 September 09)

Milk Production (kg/day)	15.0
Butterfat %	4.25
Protein %	3.75
Milk solids (kg/cow/day)	1.20
Milk solids (kg/ha/day)	2.64

Current management

Average 7 day growth rate (kg/day)	41
Farm cover (kg DM/cow)	355
Pre-grazing yield (kg DM)	1560
Rotation length (days)	44
Concentrate (kg/cow/day)	2

Concentrates fed to date (kg/cow)	557
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Cows housed by night 01 September 09 to 15 September 09 due to very wet ground conditions. Cows now out full time.

Solohead 2009/10

During the spring, between turnout and the end of May, growth rates were 20% below normal. Most of the silage area was grazed twice during the spring and the area harvested for first-cut silage was 40% lower than normal. We would normally harvest around 65 acres but only harvested 39 acres of first cut this year. Consequently, in June we purchased 25 acres of standing crop at €135 per acre or €3375 in total. However, we subsequently made up most of the deficit in silage requirements with the second cut in July (Table 1). Therefore we have approximately 230 t (fresh weight) of silage stocks above normal requirements.

Rainfall so far in 2009 has been 41% above the 10-year average (787 versus 560mm; Figure 1.) contributing to difficult grazing conditions and poor growth rates during the summer and autumn. Rainfall in July was particularly high, being three-times the 10-year average. Ground and grazing conditions are similar, if not worse, than 2008. This is the third consecutive wet summer. Typically surplus silage from good dry years is carried forward to meet requirements in difficult years. However, we carried no surplus of silage forward from 2007. In 2008 we had to house the cows 5 weeks ahead of normal, creating a feed deficit on the farm. Consequently we purchased 126 silage bales and 20 t of citrus pulp during the winter of 2008/2009. This year we have surplus silage stocks. However, it looks like we will have to house the cows early this year and will need these additional silage stocks. If weather conditions improve in the coming weeks, it is too late in the year to make a substantial difference to ground conditions and growth rates. However, an improvement in weather would be welcome.

Table 1. Feed Budget: Winter 2009/2010

Feed Requirements	Settled silage (t)	Silage DM (t)
90 cows	630	115
26 in calf heifers	180	33
28 yearling heifers	85	15
Total feed Requirements	895	163
Silage Made		
Silage – Solohead farm	875	160
Purchased standing crop for silage	250	50
	1125	210

Figure 1. Rainfall 2009 versus 10 year average

