

ALL THINGS MOLASSES newsletter

Welcome to the latest edition of United Molasses GB's All Things Molasses newsletter where we look at the importance of buffer feeding in the summer months and why molasses is the key ingredient to add for maximising its returns on farm.

ON FARM FOCUS

The importance of buffer feeding and why you need Molasses to maximise its returns!

BY MARK FEW, UMGB PRODUCT MANAGER AND RICHARD COLLEY, FARM CONSULTANT AT COLLEY BEEF AGRICULTURE

During the summer season most Dairy farms have to adapt their feeding strategies as the nutritional composition of grass will change during these months. On farm feeding strategy also has to consider grass availability as slow grass growth not only effects the nutrient levels but also if there will be physically enough volume of this forage on farm for the cattle to eat. A third factor that most farms need to consider is that grass intakes of cattle tend to typically fall as the as the summer progresses because they are not grazing enough in the morning when the grass quality is lower.

(see Table A).

“Cows graze more in the afternoon/evening when fresh grass quality is peaking so you could see a performance drop from reduced intakes in the morning when natural grazing levels are down” states Richard Colley, farm consultant at Colley Beef Agri.

For all the above reasons the most common feeding strategy adopted by most dairy farms through mid/late summer is to supplement in a buffer feed to cows before afternoon milking to maximise their daily forage intakes on top of grazed grass in order to get the right balance of nutrition into the rumen to promote milk yield returns and maintain body condition and fertility. “Where the most opportunities arise for buffer feeding is when people start calving mid-summer again and are looking for their cows to hit peak lactation yields when grass quality, intakes and yield potential are decreasing” continues Richard.

Through buffer feeding relatively small amounts of high digestible fibre feeds such as big bale silage, hay, straw or soya hulls this feeding strategy will help to improve rumen function and help maintain butter fat quality which are traditionally lower when cows are grazing.

The target with buffer feeding is to add between 5 to 10kg fresh weight a day to the cow's diet, but in order to reach these intake levels with higher fibre feeds adding a molasses liquid is a common practice in most buffer diets.

Month	Grass DMI (kg/day)
April	10
May	13
June	13
July	12
August	10
September	8

TABLE A: typical grass dry matter intakes for dairy cows throughout grazing season



MOLASSES TANK SCHEME

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continued...

Molasses will improve the palatability of the buffer feed mix and also provide a great source of concentrated sugars and thus rapidly fermentable carbohydrates (RFCs) to the cows overall diet. “Molasses brings many attributes to a buffer mix aside from improving the palatability of less palatable fibrous feeds, it also reduces ration sorting, stimulates fibre digestion and brings those all-important sugars to the rumen!” adds Richard.

In order to demonstrate the effect of adding molasses to a typical Dairy buffer diet providing a 10 litre milk yield from DyNE , Richard compared a diet with no molasses to a Grass Silage/ Straw based diet incorporating 0.5 kg per head per day of United Molasses GB’s **Molaferm 20** liquid (see Table B*).

Diet Data	Non Molasses Diet	0.5kg Molaferm 20
Ration DM %	41	41
Dry Matter Intake (kgs)	4.47	4.57
Sugars (% DM)	2.02	6.70
Starch (% DM)	22.37	18.49
Milk Yield DyNE	10	10
Cost/cow/day (£)	0.96	1.01
Margin/cow/day	3.04	3.04

TABLE B
Simple Buffer feed Grass Silage/Straw mix for 10 litre milk yield target

“These diets clearly show that the **Molaferm 20** product can be added at minimal additional cost per day to a buffer feed with the same margin return per cow in the diet calculation on paper. However the key takeaway from these diets is the sugar level as you need the molasses included to reach the desired target level of 6 to 7% for optimal rumen function, you should also not forget the molasses driven improvement of intakes which will mean the actual milk yields and margin returns will be better than the paper figures!” comments Richard.

When dairy farms are putting together buffer mixes they often start with the left over silage in the pit from the winter before as the primary component to avoid opening new season forage, however that is not always possible as if there is insufficient silage left they may choose to work on a straw based mix only. In these types of buffer diets a molasses product like Molaferm 20 can be added at just over 5% to create a good balanced diet with a 4% increase in sugars and the all important improvements in palatability and intakes.

“Remember that straw absorbs molasses just as well as a grass silage due to its higher lignin content plus any straw based buffer diet will need a liquid added to get the desired palatability bump” adds Richard.

In summary buffer feeding is an established tried and tested feeding strategy for mid to late summer feeding on dairy farms but in order to maximise its returns you should incorporate a molasses liquid to ensure you get the following key benefits from it:-

- Improves the **Palatability** of a buffer mix
- Increases **Dry Matter intakes**
- Increases **Sugars** to desired level for best rumen function
- Gets the all important **RFC's** into the cows diet
- Stimulates **fibre digestion** in rumen
- Reduces **ration sorting**

For more information about **Molaferm 20** or other liquids from our extensive range of molasses products please visit www.unitedmolasses.com or give us a call on +44 (0) 151 955 4850.

* Basis April/May 2023 prices. All diet data produced using Ultramix by AGM systems.

GB TEAM UPDATE

Simon’s 2023 London Marathon for Starlight Foundation

United Molasses GB’s Simon Markham completed his second London Marathon in 6 months this past April and in doing so smashed his record time by completing it in just 3 hours and 45 minutes!

Running again to raise money for the Starlight Children’s foundation charity, the boss raised over £3000 for this amazing charity, please join us in congratulating Simon on this incredible achievement.

