

Case Study

William Willis – Forest Farm, Aberdeenshire



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William manages the milking herd for Forest Farm Dairy; an organic dairy providing milk vending machines and assorted dairy products – yogurt, gelato, sorbet and more.

158 ha grass

150 milking cows plus replacements

Liquid milk contract with cows producing 7500-8000L/year

Approach to grazing management

Rotational Grazing Management

38ha of farm used for dairy grazing platform. Cows are turned out to grass mid-April and housed overnight from October before being housed completely in November and transitioning to silage-based diet. Aim for the farm is to produce 5000L of milk from forage. In 2019 milk from forage accounted for 5440L (standardised litres) of total annual production.

Replacement heifers and any beef cross calves are rotational grazed on a 6.5ha block split into 8 paddocks of approximately 0.8ha each. Yearling's are turned out mid-April and moved every 3-4 days. Target entry height is 2800kg DM/ha leaving a 1500kg DM/ha residual with the rotation generally taking about 24 days.

Nurse cows are used to rear calves also on a rotational grazing system.

2020 adaptations

Silage ground was utilised in Early June 2020 to extend the dairy grazing rotation when grass growth dropped below 40kg DM/ha taking the average farm cover below the target 2100. Once growth was above 67kg DM/ha those silage fields were dropped from rotation and rotation length was back around 21 days.

During late June and July all paddocks were pre mowed to maintain quality going into the 4th round of grazing.

The tools

Single strand electric fences with poly posts are used to split the subdivided paddocks, giving flexibility of allocation of grass through front and back fencing. Water troughs are strategically placed throughout paddocks.

Managing Pasture Quality

Surplus grass paddocks (10ha) with covers about 3800kg DM/ha were taken out of the dairy platform in late Spring and cut for silage to ensure rotation length is not too long. The timing of this varies year to year depending on grass growth rates.

During mid-Summer pre mowing is used as a measure to reset residuals to 1500kg DM/ha and ensure grass quality going into next round of grazing.

Dry cows are also used as a tool to tidy up residuals where dairy cows have been struggling to meet the 1500 kg DM/ha target. The aim is for cows to have an intake of 17kg DM/day predominantly through high quality grass and supplemented with 6kg of concentrates fed through the parlour.

See William's Vlog Series [here](#).



For more from our Vloggers, please go to [Fas.scot/grassland](https://fas.scot/grassland). We thank them all for sharing their lessons and success stories through the 2020 grazing season. For more livestock and grassland management articles, factsheets, videos and podcasts, please see fas.scot.