

INFORMATION FOR DAIRY FARMERS INTERESTED IN OUR NEW 'FEED TO YIELD' PROJECT

Background

Concentrate feed levels have increased on Northern Ireland dairy farms, with concentrates now comprising 60-70% of the variable costs of milk production. However, CAFRE Benchmarking data has highlighted that concentrate use efficiency on dairy farms is hugely variable, while overfeeding of concentrates contributes to the Northern Ireland phosphorus (P) surplus.

As concentrate feed levels have increased, concentrates are increasingly being offered to dairy cows on a 'feed-to-yield' basis, with feed levels in excess of 15 - 20 kg concentrate/cow/day not uncommon with higher yielding cows. However, AFBI research suggests that concentrate levels in excess of 13 - 14 kg per cow/day are associated with compromised milk quality (especially lower milk fats), and this can result in some of the potential economic benefits of these higher yielding cows being lost. There is currently no 'farm data' to support this important finding, nor is there evidence of the impact of these higher feed levels on cow fertility and health.

It is expected that a number of factors will influence the performance and profitability of cows within feed-to-yield systems, including silage quality, concentrate composition, concentrate intake, feeding levels, and cow genetics. This project aims to examine how these factors affect the performance of individual cows within feed-to-yield systems, and in particular their effects on milk yield, milk composition, fertility and health.

What we are looking for?

AgriSearch, in partnership with AFBI, are seeking to recruit 30 dairy farmers from across Northern Ireland to participate in the study. Participating farmers will ideally meet the following criteria:

- Operate a 'feed-to-yield' concentrate allocation strategy during the winter
- Be participating in monthly milk recording
- Average milk yields in excess of 7500 litres/cow/year
- Good fertility and health records currently being maintained
- Have a minimum of 40 cows calving between September 2018 and January 2019
- Ideally Pedigree registered (or able to provide sire and maternal grandsire information)
- Be willing to provide AFBI with access to data and records required within the project
- Be willing to provide feed samples for analysis
- Ideally participating in CAFRE benchmarking.

Please note that participating farmers will NOT be asked to modify management practices on their farm. However you will need to be willing to provide AFBI scientists with a range of information relating to cows in your herd. Within this project we hope that much of this

information can, with your permission, be obtained electronically from the data bases where it is stored.

Next Steps

If you wish to apply, download an application form from the AgriSearch website and return via email to elizabeth@agrisearch.org or by post to:

AgriSearch
Innovation Centre
Large Park
Hillsborough
County Down
BT26 6DR

Deadline

Applications forms must arrive no later than noon on Monday 9th July 2018.

Further Information

If you have any specific queries then contact either Elizabeth Earle (AgriSearch) on 028 9268 1514.