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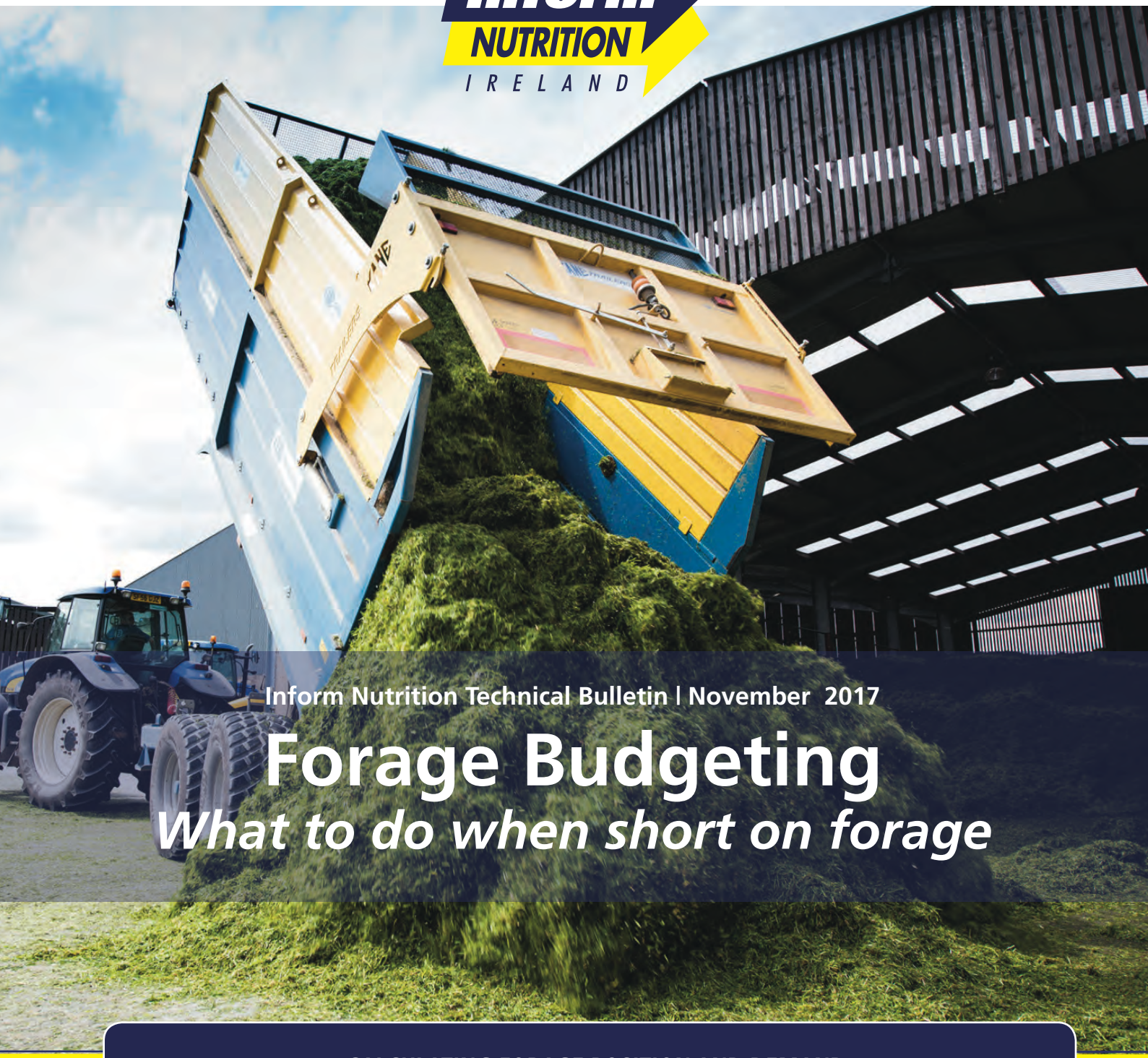

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Forage Budgeting

What to do when short on forage

- CALCULATING FORAGE POSITION AND DEMAND
- WHEN SHORT FORAGE - REDUCE DEMAND - BUY FORAGE - FODDER STRETCHERS
- ALTERNATIVE FEEDS - COST
- PRACTICAL APPLICATION - NO WEIGHING FACILITIES OR DIET FEEDER
- WHERE TO CUT BACK FORAGE - DIET EXAMPLES

• Forage Budgeting

In many parts of the country fodder is scarce. For those who think they can scrape through, a late spring could cause problems. Silage at the moment is making over £40 per tonne in the north of Ireland.

It is important that all farmers immediately access their forage position. The easiest savings will be made from drying off to calving and with young stock. These will also be the least expensive in terms of cost and will have a less significant effect on health and production than changes to diet when cows are milking. Calculate the size of the pit in square feet and divide by 50 to convert to tonnes (all calculation based of 20%DM silage).

The next step will be to calculate the demand. Cows will average an intake of 50kgs per day once housed whether milking or dry. Growing weanlings eating 2kgs of concentrate will average close to 25kg over the winter with heavier suckler weanlings eating more.

“It is important that all farmers immediately access their forage position.”

Calculate the size of the pit in square feet and divide by 50 to convert to tonnes

• What you can do if you are short of forage

Reduce demand-

Are we feeding animals we should not have?

It is important to have forage for our most productive animal i.e. cows in the few weeks before calving and for the milking cow after calving. Other cattle, examples cull cows or store cattle can be sold or at least evaluate their worth in terms of what it is going to cost to buy feed for them.

Buy forage-

The table below gives some indication of the value of forage. There is a minimum quantity of forage required in the diet. For dry cows and weanlings you would like to have at least 50% forage on an dry matter basis. This could be reduced where there is severe shortage.

1 Kgs of concentrate will replace 6kgs of grass silage. The calculation is based on 68DMD silage (UFL 0.75), Concentrate UFL (0.9).

Price of Concentrate	Value Silage/Tonne DM	Value Per Tonne as Fed	Value per 800kg Round bale
180	150	30	24
200	166	33.2	26.5
240	200	40	32

• Fodder Stretcher's

> "Always balance the feed for calcium, sodium and vitamins."

It is best to use a blend of ingredients to reduce some of the variability found in raw materials. Feeding straight feeds at high levels can be problematic. Always balance the feed for calcium, sodium and vitamins. The types of ingredients used are low in calcium and sodium and the ability of the animal to get the full value of the feed will be impaired if not added. There will be very little vitamin present in these feeds. It is important to supplement essential vitamins (Vitamin E, A and D).

Ensure a balanced mineral supplement is added such as **Code 23 Inform Intensive Beef mineral** where straights are being fed. Where high levels of concentrate feed have to be fed to dry cattle **Rumbuff & yeast** should be added to the feed reduce the risk of acidosis and improve feed utilisation where forage inclusion is low. Rumbuff should not be fed to cows within one month of calving.

• Alternative Feeds

There are a range of feeds available but in a scarce fodder situation and high demand they are often poor value for money. Examples are fodder beet, whole crop, maize silage, brewers grains etc.

Carefully work out the cost of any feed that contains moisture, when feed is scarce they often offer the poorest value for money.

Example Beet - has a dry matter of 20% approx. so multiply by 5 to get the cost on a dry matter basis. Add 10% for soil tare and respiration losses. Multiply any processing costs e.g. washing and chopping by 5 to get the cost on a dry matter basis. In the example below I put a cost of €3 – this equates to €15 to process a tonne of dry matter or 5 tonne of fresh product.

Example beet costing €40 delivered and allow €3 per tonne for washing and chopping. Cost on a dry matter basis is 40 x 5= 200 x 1.1(tare & respiration) = 220 =15(processing) = 235. You then have to balance for protein and mineral to compare to the cost of a purchased fodder stretcher. For beet costing €35 the above calculation works to €207.50 per tonne and for beet costing €45 it works to €262/tonne.

• Practical Application

If we want to replace silage with concentrate how do we achieve this where there are no weighing facilities or diet feeder. Start feeding the animals Ad-Lib silage and let them settle in this diet (for 7 to 10 days). Replace a percentage of the diet with concentrates.

You can measure a few blocks in sq feet and divide by 50 to get the weight in tonnes.

• Where is it easiest cut back forage?

Dry cows will eat approximately 50kgs of silage per day. Cows that have a longer dry period can eat a lot more. For example a cow dried off 12-14 weeks before calving could easily eat 70kgs silage for the first month of the dry period. These cows often end up over conditioned at calving.

Example Diet	Example Diet
Dry cows	***Weanling***
50kgs silage 38kg silage + 2kgs concentrate 32kgs silage +3kg concentrate	25kg silage +2kg concentrate 19kgs silage +3kgs concentrate
Code 1270 Vet Tech Mag 28 Pre Calver mineral	**Code 23** Inform Intensive Beef mineral where straights are being fed

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