BUILDING A STRONGER BUSINESS: LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

HOW ONE SHROPSHIRE FARMER USED DATA TO DRIVE PROFITS BY INCREASING YIELDS FROM FORAGE, CAREFUL PLANNING AND UTILISING VALUABLE RESOURCES

SAM TAYLOR
NORTH SHROPSHIRE

THE CHALLENGE

In 2008, Sam Taylor's farm was home to 220 cows who were averaging 6500 litres and feeding 2.0 tonnes of concentrate per cow. The grazing system was set stocking, which was below average at 50% utilisation. With a range of soils on the North Shropshire farm, however, Sam realised the potential to make improvements with the support of his Promar Farm Consultant, Andrew Hawkins.

The challenge was to make the most of this resource and to make valuable alterations in order to increase yield from forage and, per cow.

THE SOLUTION

With Andrew's assistance, Sam recognised that the herd needed better infrastructure. The farm team utilised existing material to construct a network of cow tracks to the grazing fields. This enabled them to implement rotational paddock grazing, measure grass growth rates, and to maximise dry matter intakes and production by grazing at the target growth stage.

By using our data service, Milkminder, Sam was able to easily monitor the impact that these changes were having on the monthly margin over feed. While Herdwatch gave him the ability to quickly access fertility, milk production and milk prediction information. Both have been incremental to the progression of the farm.

In March 2011, Sam won the Midlands Milkminder Manager of the Year with a herd average of 7550 litres from 2.0 tonnes of concentrate per cow. Compared to 2008, this was an increase of 1000 litres from forage.

CONCENTRATING ON QUALITY MILK WITH HIGHER YIELDS

Since 2011, in line with the growth plan, the herd has grown to 420 cows (March 2020). The cow tracks and paddocks are still in use but to enable this number of cows to have access to fresh grass the farm invested in a zero-grazing system. This was used through the growing season to cut and feed out high-quality perennial rye grass-white clover medium term leys.

In 2018/19, a new cowshed was built for 150 milkers with exterior feeding, cow comfort cubicles and auto scrapers. A new semi-rapid exit 30:60 milking parlour was also installed with a new building, including auto ID, shedding gates and a handling race. This was to enable the increased herd size to be milked and handled efficiently.

By making these valuable changes, and using Milkminder to monitor performance, Sam has successfully achieved an efficient level of milk production. Concentrating on quality milk and increasing yield from forage has successfully helped the business to progress.

FOCUS ON PEOPLE

With Andrew's guidance, Sam has also been able to refine the farm's recruitment process, including advertising, interviewing candidates and employment contracts. The ability to attract good people and allow them to develop their career has been key to unlocking even greater potential on farm.

> "I use Milkminder monthly to obtain a spot check of herd performance, and to compare the current month with last year and the rolling averages. I note calving %, feed use, cost and most importantly margins. The ability to focus particularly on yield from forage has been really beneficial, helping to drive profit.
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> With Andrew's guidance and assistance, we've also been able to refine our farm structure and assemble a motivated and skilled team. This has been critical for the business to achieve our shared objectives."

Sam Taylor
Farm Owner

PER COW THE FARM IS NOW ACHIEVING

8500 litres of milk	Feeding **2.2 tonnes**	A yield from forage of **3500 litres**	This makes the dairy herd margin **three** times higher than it was in 2008