

Controlling late spring pasture surplus

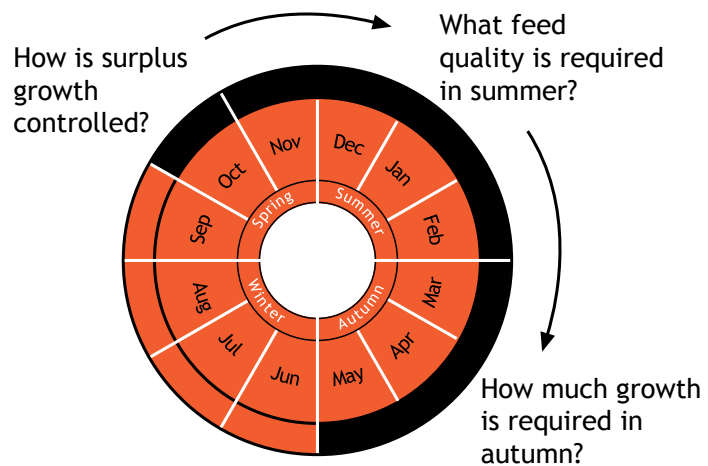
Summary

- Management of surplus growth in late spring is important, because rank pastures lose density and clover content, and therefore grow less DM next autumn.
- More immediately, rank pastures show up in reduced feed quality and animal performance.

Controlling the spring flush

Correct pasture management in late spring is essential if farmers are to achieve target pasture covers at the start of winter, and avoid loss of feed quality by letting pasture become rank.

Key feed planning decisions



Five main ways to control spring surplus

1. **Make supplements, preferably high quality silage.** The secret here is to shut paddocks before the surplus is apparent (i.e. October rather than November). The start of a surplus can be anticipated using a pasture supply/demand model - it is relatively constant from year to year. Should feed become short, these paddocks can always be brought back into grazing.
2. **Summer crop or pasture renewal.** Taking paddocks out for summer crop or renewal means there is less grass to worry about, and more quality feed available during potential deficits.
3. **On sheep farms, graze cattle with set-stocked ewes and lambs to keep spring pastures from getting too long.** Late-calving cows and calves can be set-stocked; works heifers can be rotated. Once a surplus can be seen, it is too late to control it.
4. **On sheep farms, retire selected paddocks from grazing, let them go unchecked, and concentrate on maintaining good control over the rest of the farm.** Steep paddocks should not be retired. Paddocks on lower contours are easier to clean up later on and will produce a better growth response.
5. **Using late heading ryegrass.** Sowing these in a renovation plan can help improve spring quality.