

# Graze debate 2022 –

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## Farm Facts

- 774 ha, of which around 300 ha is tussocky hill ground
- Well maintained land drainage and soils kept on target pH and fertility
- 200 spring calving cows and 1250 breeding ewes
- The herd breeding is moving from Limousin to Saler genetics while the ewe flock is moving from Scottish Blackface to Lleyn/Aberfield crosses
- Cows brought in only for calving on March 7th in 2021.
- Aim for 6–7 week calving
- Grows 6ha of Spring Barley undersown with Italian Ryegrass.

## Key challenges

- Would like to spend more time with young family
- Under financial pressure to make profit



## Forage Management

In byelands rested from December.

Fertiliser on grazing land was 100 weight/acre (123 kg urea/hectare) in 2021, this has been eliminated in 2022. Start rotational grazing in June with around 21-day rest period. Multi-sire mating (2 bulls with 75 cows) helps with grazing pressure for grass quality control. Using herbal leys for animal performance and to reduce nitrogen fertiliser use. Herbal ley cultivations consisted of a pan buster then disked and power harrowed then sown.

Kale/Rape-Kale hybrids with bale grazing for wintering heifers and twin bearing cows (scanned early to identify before deferred grazing).

Crimson – and red-clover ley with Westerwolds grass sown at the end of April. Clover is a particularly valuable source of protein-rich pollen – which bees require to feed their growing breed. Crimson clover flowers during July when nests are rapidly increasing in size. David might leave a strip along the margin as the bees will still benefit from a small amount. Field will be cut for hay if possible for bale grazing heifers.



*Dr Paul Hargreaves scored the soil structure 2.5 on 3-year herbal ley field (VESS scoring system from 1 – no compaction evidence to 5 – severely compacted) – therefore no remediation recommended but compaction risk should be minimised by avoiding grazing in wet conditions and minimising tractor damage. The soils were Brown Earths which are generally low risk for compaction.*



*Deferred grazing land for 150–170 cows in 3 mobs. Using the No Fence collars the cows will be grazed east to west from September to March. The ewe flock will have free roam over the area too. Blocks will be put out and the cows are bolused twice a year. This land was previously grazed bare during the summer, resting it will have wildlife benefits.*



*Three-year sward showed chicory, clover and grasses still strong (clover/chicory approximately 20–30% of composition).*