

Using the BSH Sward Stick



How do I monitor my grass production?

Use your BSH Sward Stick weekly (or twice weekly during peak growth periods) to monitor height of swards and dry matter available.

- Walk each field in a “W” pattern
- Take 40 leaf-top readings per field (ignore stems, flowers and weeds)
- Avoid unrepresentative areas (e.g. gateways)
- Calculate field averages and record
- Collect data for seasonal and year-on-year assessment

How can this information help me?

With a better understanding of grassland production you can:

- Use grass more efficiently by achieving optimum grazing heights
- Plan ahead more effectively (grass budgeting)
- Make best use of fertiliser and supplements
- Achieve optimum stocking densities
- Know how much your stock are eating
- Identify forage gaps and under-performing pastures
- Identify peaks and troughs in growth patterns
- Plan your reseeding strategy more effectively



Using optimum grazing heights

- Grazing to recommended post-grazing heights helps maintain sward tiller density and avoids waste and poor quality stemmy material
- Top pastures when necessary in early season (to 5cm) to maintain sward quality
- Use pre-grazing heights and rotation intervals to assess “paddock skipping” and buffer feeding strategy



OPTIMUM GRAZING HEIGHTS

Milking cows

Grazing Period	Rotational			Continuous
	Pre-graze (cm)	Post-graze (cm)	Interval guide (days)	
Turn Out - May	10-15	6-7	16-20	6-7
June - July	12-15	7-8	20-24	7-8
Aug - Sept	12-18	8-9	24-28	8-9
Oct - Housing	12-15	6-7	Variable	6-7



Beef cattle

Class of stock	Grazing period	Rotational/Aftermath grazing		Continuous
		Pre-graze (cm)	Post-graze (cm)	
Sucklers (milking)	Turn Out- May	10-14	5-6	5-6
	June - July	12-15	7-8	7-9
	Aug - Nov	12-15	8-9	7-9
Growing/ finishing	Turn Out - May	10-12	5-6	5-6
	June - July	10-14	6-7	6-7
	Aug - Nov	10-15	7-8	7-8



Sheep

Class of stock	Grazing period	Rotational/Aftermath grazing		Continuous
		Pre-graze (cm)	Post-graze (cm)	
Ewes & lambs	Turn out - April	8-10	4-5	4
	May - Weaning	8-10	4-6	4-6
Pre-tupping	Sept - Nov	8-10	4-5	6-8
Weaned lamb for finish	July - Sept	10-12	5-7	6-8



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Also:

- **Optimum grazing height for dry cows, dry ewes and store lambs of 4-5cm**
- **Sward height for finishing cattle and lambs should increase gradually throughout the season**
- **Ewes and lambs should be supplemented until sward height exceeds 4cm**