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TOMORROW'S FARMER

CMC crediton milling company
Feeding Tomorrows Farmers Today

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YOUR **NEWSLETTER** FROM **CREDITON MILLING COMPANY**

# Thinking about drier conditions. A plan for next year.

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**With longer dry spells becoming a regular feature of the UK climate, (watch it rain now and not stop) we are having to rethink how to grow, manage and conserve forage.**

FORAGE

The challenge is not just grass growth slowing down during summer, but the knock-on effect this has on the availability of dry matter available for feeding both in real time and later in the year. If there's not enough in the clamp or the field, milk output and cow condition can quickly suffer.

So, what can be done now to get ahead of the problem? And what can we learn from countries already used to farming in drier climates?

The first step is to look again at the reliability of our current grass swards. Perennial ryegrass remains the mainstay, but its shallow root system means it's one of the first species to shut down in hot, dry weather. While some improved ryegrass varieties have been bred for better drought tolerance and persistence under stress, there are benefits to going beyond ryegrass altogether.

Including deeper rooted grasses such as cocksfoot and tall fescue in seed mixes can provide a buffer against summer moisture deficits. Cocksfoot is quicker to bounce back after dry spells and offers good regrowth when rain returns. Tall fescue is slower to establish but very persistent and better able to maintain production in dry conditions. These species are already widely used in parts of southern Europe and are beginning to attract more attention in the UK.

Other plants like plantain and chicory not only improve drought resilience but can also improve soil structure and mineral uptake. Their deep taproots access nutrients from lower in the profile, and they keep growing later into the season when ryegrass begins to struggle.

Lucerne is another proven option in drier climates. It's not suited to grazing, but as a silage crop it produces high protein forage with excellent dry matter yields. Lucerne also fixes its own nitrogen, making it less reliant on fertiliser inputs.

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# From gut feel to data-driven:

## How herd insights using UNIFORM-agri are shaping dairy success

ELLEN LAYZELL AND GRAHAM NOWELL
UNIFORM-Agri Software Support Team

**Not long ago, dairy herd management relied mostly on stockmanship, a good eye, strong memory, and years of experience. That still counts, but technology is quietly transforming how decisions are made on farm.**

DAIRY

Systems like UNIFORM-Agri are helping farmers turn everyday information into real-time insight, boosting herd performance and streamlining work.

One of the biggest wins is simplicity. With everything connected; milking systems, activity monitors, milk recorders, a single data entry updates everything. Using the app means you can log events as they happen, so records stay accurate.

### What UNIFORM helps with:

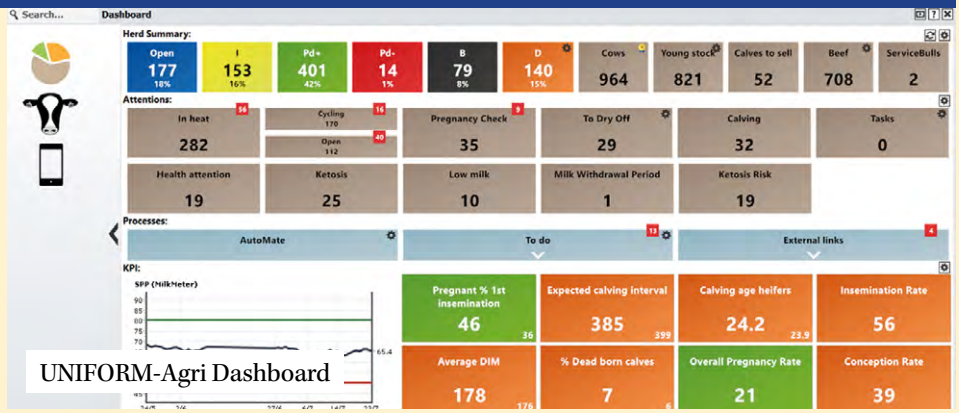
**Real-time herd overviews**
The dashboard pulls together milk yields, activity alerts, fertility data and health trends, helping spot small changes before they become bigger issues.

**Animal health monitoring**
Track problems like mastitis, lameness and high cell counts more accurately. Risk factors such as ketosis are flagged early, giving time to act.

**Routine health tasks**
Set up and monitor treatment plans, vaccinations and hoof care schedules: keeping everything consistent and on time.

**Feeding decisions**
See milk production by group or lactation stage to fine-tune rations. Share insights with your nutritionist to adjust diets quickly and effectively.

**Fertility management**
Access clear data on oestrus activity, conception and pregnancy rates. Identify patterns, tweak service timing, and manage calving blocks with more confidence.



UNIFORM-Agri Dashboard

**Compliance made easier**
Digital records on medicine use and animal events are ready when needed, saving time and reducing stress during inspections.

**Longevity insights**
Monitor culling reasons, lifetime production, and lactation trends to improve herd structure and keep your best animals for longer.

Support plays a key role in making the most of the system. UNIFORM offers online training, webinars and one-to-one help to build confidence and skills, whether you're just getting started or want to take it further.

As dairy farming evolves, having tools to help you spot trends, act faster and plan ahead is becoming essential. With good data, better decisions come naturally.

DAIRY

# Back to the basics

CMC ROBERT MACHIN
PLACEMENT STUDENT

Within this time, it became apparent to me about the importance of getting the basics right on farm and how many farmers don't understand the impact this can have upon their efficiency and profitability.

In today's world of precision farming, performance data, and high-spec nutrition, it's easy to overlook the simple factors that are the fundamentals to your farm's success.

Even the best ration in the world won't perform if the basics aren't right on the farm. It seems that most herds can benefit from small tweaks in day-to-day management, and this could unlock major gains in yield and herd health.

Arriving on farm, I quickly learnt about the importance of feed space. Crowding at the feed barrier can suppress intakes, increase competition, and cause stress particularly for younger or lower-ranking cows. Aiming to provide at least 2 feet of feed space per dairy cow in a TMR or self-fed silage system. This ensures cows can eat when they want, reducing slug feeding and rumen disruption. Push-up frequency also matters. Cows naturally feed 10–14 times per day, if fresh feed isn't accessible, intakes drop, and so does performance.

Water is a vital commodity to a cattle herd in terms of keeping on the correct side of animal health, milk yield and heat stress. A dairy cow at peak can drink up to 150l of water per day so there must be a safe and reliable supply in place. Milk is 87% water and yet water access is often compromised by poor flow rates, dirty troughs, or not enough space. Each cow needs 10cm of trough space minimum, and at least 3 drinking points per 100 cows, ideally located near feed and resting areas. Water should be clean, cool, and freely available.

**As a placement student from Harper Adams, I am fortunate to go out on farm with specialists and disappear into the back-ground, despite my size!**

There are many examples of were performance lifts simply by cleaning troughs more regularly. It's one of the easiest wins on-farm. If you wouldn't want to drink it why should your cows? Another simple, but key factor, is feed space cleanliness, as it's not just what you feed, it's how it's presented. Mouldy feed, stale TMR, and dirty troughs can lead to reduced intakes, poor rumen function, and even toxin exposure. This will put your animal health at risk, which no farmers will want to be doing.

Keeping feed troughs and barriers clean is key, as mouldy feed spreads, and means fresh feed heats quicker especially in hot weather. And don't forget clamp face management means a fresher, more palatable silage at every feed-out, that will help dry matter intake for your herd.

Whether its dry cow management or intensive beef systems, there are lots of new products you can implement onto your farm, but they will be hopeless if the basics aren't right. Build solid foundations, then you can build as high as you like from there, but without that there are only certain highs you can reach before you fall.

## Thinking about drier conditions. A plan for next year.

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In Australia, southern Europe, and parts of the US, lucerne is a mainstay forage crop where summers are routinely dry.

New Zealand farms offer another useful lesson, they don't just rely on pasture. Many grow wholecrop cereals such as barley or oats to boost dry matter availability in late spring and summer.

Wholecrop silage is one of the simplest ways to build forage stocks and take pressure off grassland, or the option of maize (can't have an article without me talking about maize I'm afraid).

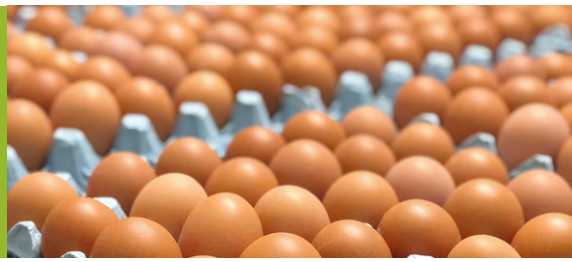
Improving first-cut timing also makes a difference. Cutting earlier, before crops become too fibrous, supports faster and healthier regrowth. Chasing bulk too late into the season risks leaving swards stressed and unproductive going into a dry spell.

Lastly, make sure nutrient applications match plant demand and soil conditions. Applying slurry or fertiliser when soil is too dry is a waste of money and can do more harm than good. Moisture aware management, even something as simple as checking with a spade and soil thermometer, helps target inputs more effectively.

Building a more drought-resilient forage system is all about diversity in species, in cropping options, and in thinking. With drier summers likely to become more common, shifting towards more robust mixes and flexible cropping plans will be key to ensuring cows are kept well fed through the year.

# The benefits of prebiotics and probiotics for laying hens

**Keeping laying hens healthy and productive is crucial for ensuring good egg quality and maintaining profitable flocks. Among the most effective natural options for supporting bird health are prebiotics and probiotics.**



POULTRY

These feed additives play a key role in promoting gut health, boosting nutrient uptake, and improving overall performance, all without the need for antibiotics.

## Probiotics: the beneficial bacteria

Probiotics are live microorganisms, mainly from groups such as Lactobacillus, Bifidobacterium, Bacillus, or specific yeast strains, which are added to feed or water. Once ingested, these helpful bacteria settle in the intestinal tract and compete with harmful pathogens like Salmonella and E. coli. This natural process, called competitive exclusion, helps keep disease-causing microbes under control and encourages a more stable gut environment.

Probiotics are also known to enhance the immune system. They encourage the body to produce more natural antibodies and immune cells, making the hens more resilient to infections. Studies have shown that birds on probiotic supplemented diets tend to suffer fewer digestive issues and have a reduced need for antibiotic treatments.

## Prebiotics: supporting healthy microbes

Prebiotics are non digestible components found in feed, often coming from certain fibres or oligosaccharides. They work differently to probiotics. Rather than adding new bacteria to the gut, prebiotics serve as a food source for the beneficial microbes already present in the digestive system.

Once prebiotics pass through the upper digestive tract, they arrive in the lower intestine where they encourage beneficial bacteria to grow and thrive. This helps create a healthier gut environment by lowering pH levels and making it more difficult for harmful pathogens to establish themselves. Prebiotics can also lead to greater production of short chain fatty acids, which strengthen the gut lining and improve the uptake of nutrients from feed.

## Improved productivity in laying hens

A healthier gut directly leads to better feed efficiency. Hens with a balanced microbiome digest and absorb nutrients more effectively, which helps support higher egg production and stronger shells. Birds receiving prebiotics and probiotics often show more consistent laying patterns, better shell strength, and steadier egg weights.

Flocks also benefit from fewer digestive disorders, meaning lower mortality and fewer birds needing to be culled. This results in more even body condition across the flock, making day-to-day management simpler and production more reliable. Prebiotics and probiotics can also help birds cope better with common stress factors such as high temperatures, transport, or changes in housing, all of which can otherwise lead to dips in productivity.

With more consumers focusing on food health and sustainability the inclusion natural feed additives provide an effective solution. By supporting gut health and reducing disease risk in a natural way, prebiotics and probiotics help producers meet growing demands for animal welfare and sustainable farming while maintaining high production standards.

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