Feeding for Milk Solids at grass

Low Milk Protein %
- Low Milk Protein % is predictably an issue on many farms in Spring.
- Many herds calve relatively thin and grass-silage quality and quantity can be tight indoors.
- After turnout, grass may be scare and supplementary feeding levels low.
- Milk Protein % is directly related to the cow’s feed energy supply.
- A+B-C milk payment system increases the focus on milk composition.
- There is a strong stage-of-lactation influence on Milk Protein %.
- Milk Protein % drops from calving, bottoms out at peak yield and increases to drying-off.
- A 3.3% herd average might dip to 3.1% at peak and hit 3.7% at end of lactation.
- Compact-calving herds have a lower Milk Protein trough with more cows peaking together.
- Very low Milk Protein (<3.0%) is usually a sign of Energy shortage i.e. underfed cows.
- Underfed cows milk off their backs in the short-term but drop Milk Protein % immediately.
- Milk Protein will increase again if feeding improves but will not recover fully.
- If body condition drops and is not corrected by breeding time, fertility will also suffer.
- Grazed grass is much better for Milk Protein production than grass-silage.
- However, Milk Protein will drop if grass is scarce and not supplemented.
- Concentrates increase Milk Protein % while grass-silage depresses it at grass.
- Milk Protein response can reach +0.1% per 2kg extra nuts where grass is tight.
- Higher energy concentrates will also help but feeding enough is relatively more important.
- High protein feeds will depress Milk Protein % where energy supply is the real problem.

Low Milk Fat %
- Low Milk Fat % on grass indicates a fibre shortage leading to low rumen pH.
- Long fibre (hay/straw) helps on lush spring grass, particularly soft re-growth.
- Gain pasture feeds with digestible fibre and rumen buffers will also help.

Supplementing Spring Grass
- Cows need their supplement if they are still clearing their grass allocation.
- Outdoor cows on tight grass require approx 1kg nuts for each 1kg grass DMI short.
- Cows in early-lactation typically require 16-17% Protein in the total diet DM.
- Grass-silage averages 10-14% protein.
- Stored-up first-grazing grass is higher at approx. 18-20% protein.
- Second grazing Spring regrowth can be particularly high at 25%+ protein.
- Excess diet protein should be avoided to reduce scouring, increase milk yield and fertility.
- Gain 18% protein concentrates (4.5-9kg/day) suit on grass-silage with restricted grass.
- Gain 13-14% protein concentrates (2.5-4.0 kg/day) suit when on grass alone.
- Gain Pasture Micro Nuts supply 2oz Cal Mag and minerals in 1.5kg where grass is plentiful.
- Gain Spring Breeder Nuts contain NOVATAN to help reduce protein scouring on pasture.
- Where cows need to be fed, Gain Pasture feeds supplying Cal Mag and minerals will beat straights and alternative sources of Magnesium and Minerals, both on cost and convenience.

Regards, Chris Miller, Nutritionist, Gain Feeds.
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