

Hungry or Full ?

- Grass growth remains low due to weather conditions.
 - Paddocks need to be walked weekly to estimate growth rates and covers .
 - Growth rate is dependant on weather , soil type , location , soil fertility etc.
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- Many farms are very short of grass and are grazing low covers.
 - Grassland management is not easy due to fluctuations in growth rates.
 - Dairy herds need to be on a rising plane of nutrition and getting enough to eat.
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- There is a tendency to overestimate grass availability.
 - There is a tendency to overestimate grass dry matter.
 - There is a tendency to overestimate cow intake from grass.
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- Overestimating the previous will lead to overgrazing and restricted intake.
 - Restricting intake and thereby increasing hunger will decrease output.
 - Cows will be on a falling plane of nutrition.
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- If cows look empty , showing as low gut fill and low rumen fill , intake is reduced.
 - Well fed cows will exhibit a ' full bellied ' appearance.
 - Empty cows are unsettled , they will rush to a new paddock or back to the yard.

WHAT DOES A LOW GRASS COVER LOOK LIKE ?

A low cover is when the amount of grass to be grazed is less than 8 centimeters (cm) high.

In kilograms of Dry Matter terms , 8 cm is about 800 kgs of Dry Matter per Hectare.

(In thick grass swards , the 8 cm height could be up to 1000 kgs of DM per Hectare.)

This grass is very leafy with low stem and very high crude protein , 25 to 30 %.
It will be 80 to 85% Dry Matter Digestibility (DMD) and very low in fibre.

WHAT DOES AN IDEAL GRASS COVER LOOK LIKE ?

The ideal cover on the next paddock to be grazed should be around 12 cm in height.
In Kilograms of Dry Matter terms , 12 cm is about 1200 kgs of Dry Matter per Hectare.
(In thick grass swards , the 12 cm height could be up to 1400 kgs of DM per Hectare.)
This grass is leafy with some stem and high crude protein , 20 to 25%.
It will be 75 to 80% DMD and medium in fibre.

WHAT DOES A HIGH GRASS COVER LOOK LIKE ?

A high cover on the next paddock to be grazed would be around 16 cm in height.
In Kilograms of Dry Matter terms , 16 cm is about 1600 kgs of Dry Matter per Hectare.
(In thick grass swards , the 16 cm height could be up to 2000 kgs of DM per Hectare.)
This grass is medium leaf with medium stem and medium crude protein , 15 to 20%.
It will be 70 to 75% DMD and high in fibre .

AVOID UNDERFEEDING HERDS DURING THE BREEDING SEASON.