

Farmers Extend Grazing Season by Two Months

An article from Rural Matters magazine (spring 2005)

Tim and Wendy Radley (dairy farmers) have been able to extend their grazing season by two months using a new scheme called grass +. The pair farm in Cheshire where they have 100ha of grazing land and nearly 300 cows. Already members of a local discussion group, the Cheshire Grazers, they joined the grass + scheme in 2003. "Using the programme we have built up the confidence to utilize grass more efficiently and have subsequently extended our grazing year by at least two months" explained Tim.

Grass + was launched by the Milk Development Council in 2003 and already has 1200 dairy farmer members. It brings together the latest thinking on grassland management and feeding to provide advice that will reduce costs and improve productivity. Nearly 50% of farmers signed up to the scheme have made changes to their farming as a result.

Farmers joining the scheme are given a comprehensive manual and encouraged to attend workshops and specialist events designed to help UK dairy farmers make the most of their grass. In addition members are constantly updated with new research, as soon as it is published.

The grass + scheme is completely free for all MDC levy payers. Find out more at the RASE's Grassland Event which is held at Stoneleigh on the 18th and 19th May 2005. Here, grass + staff will be asking farmers to think about their fertiliser use and to calculate the true value of slurry on their farm. Slurry and manure can play a big role in cutting costs as the nutrients they supply can typically save £50-£100 per hectare.

More than 12,500 visitors are expected at Grassland 2005 where the focus will be on demonstrating the merits of efficient grass and forage production. At the same time visitors will be able to find out how best to meet cross compliance measures and safeguard their Single Farm Payment.

For more information visit the Grassland 2005 website www.grassland2005.org.uk.