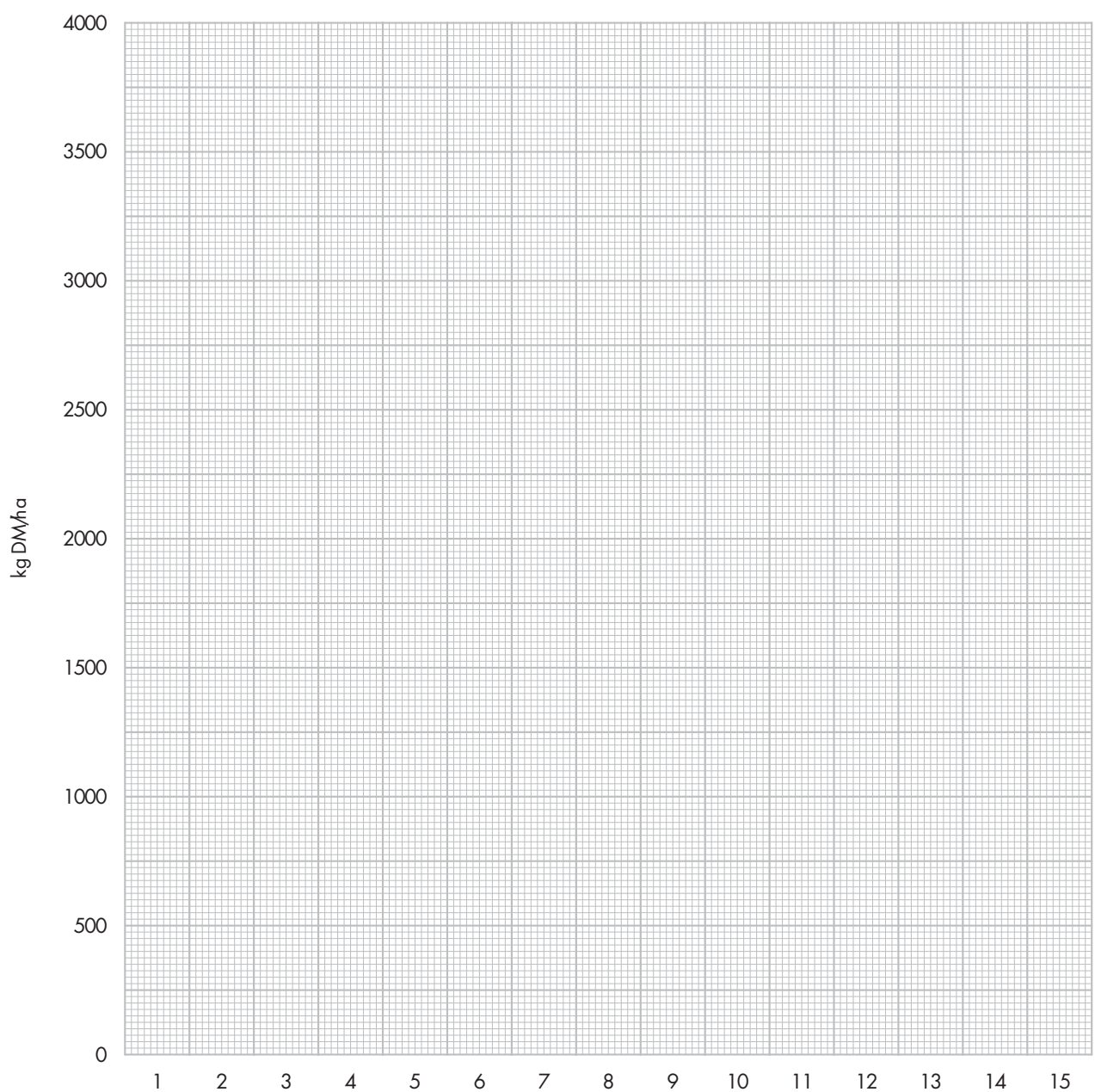


Feed wedges – a tool for grazing management.

Produce your own field cover availability chart (Feed Wedge) as set out in **Section 5 (Figure 5.1)** using field cover measurements made or with a rising plate meter (**Section 3**) to identify impending grazing surpluses or shortfalls.

**PHOTOCOPY THIS SHEET TO
ALLOW REPEATED USE.**



A feed wedge is a tool for planning the herd's grazing for the next 2–3 weeks. It gives a picture of the amount of grass ahead of cows and how fast grass is re-growing behind cows. It is a way of gaining control over grazing and reducing the risk of too much or too little feed.

Constructing a feed wedge

After plate metering all fields in your grazing block, the paddock name/number is placed in the box corresponding to the amount of feed in that paddock (see example below). The boxes are always

filled in from the left hand side. A feed wedge can also be produced in a computer spreadsheet. Working in kg DM/ha means that grass growth rates and cow intakes are in the same units.

Note: using a feed wedge assumes all paddocks are the same size, which is not normally the case on farms. Small paddocks can be combined and larger ones split for grazing management and using a feed wedge.

For example: Paddock 19 had a pasture cover of 2352kg DM/ha, paddock six had a pasture cover of 1625kg DM/ha.

Pasture in paddock					Paddock number/name				
kg DM/ha									
3200									
3100	13	2	7	8					
3000	3	4							
2900									
2800									
2700									
2600									
2500									
2400									
2300	19	5							
2200	16								
2100	17								
2000									
1900									
1800	14								
1700	11	12							
1600	6	9	10	1	15	18			

In this example, the shape of the feed wedge shows six long paddocks ready for grazing, and nine short recently-grazed paddocks. There are only four medium short paddocks which could suggest a shortage of grazing paddocks, after the long ones have been grazed.

Options for the following week's grazing could include getting more grazing from the long paddocks, topping up with supplement if necessary, or applying some nitrogen to the shorter paddocks.

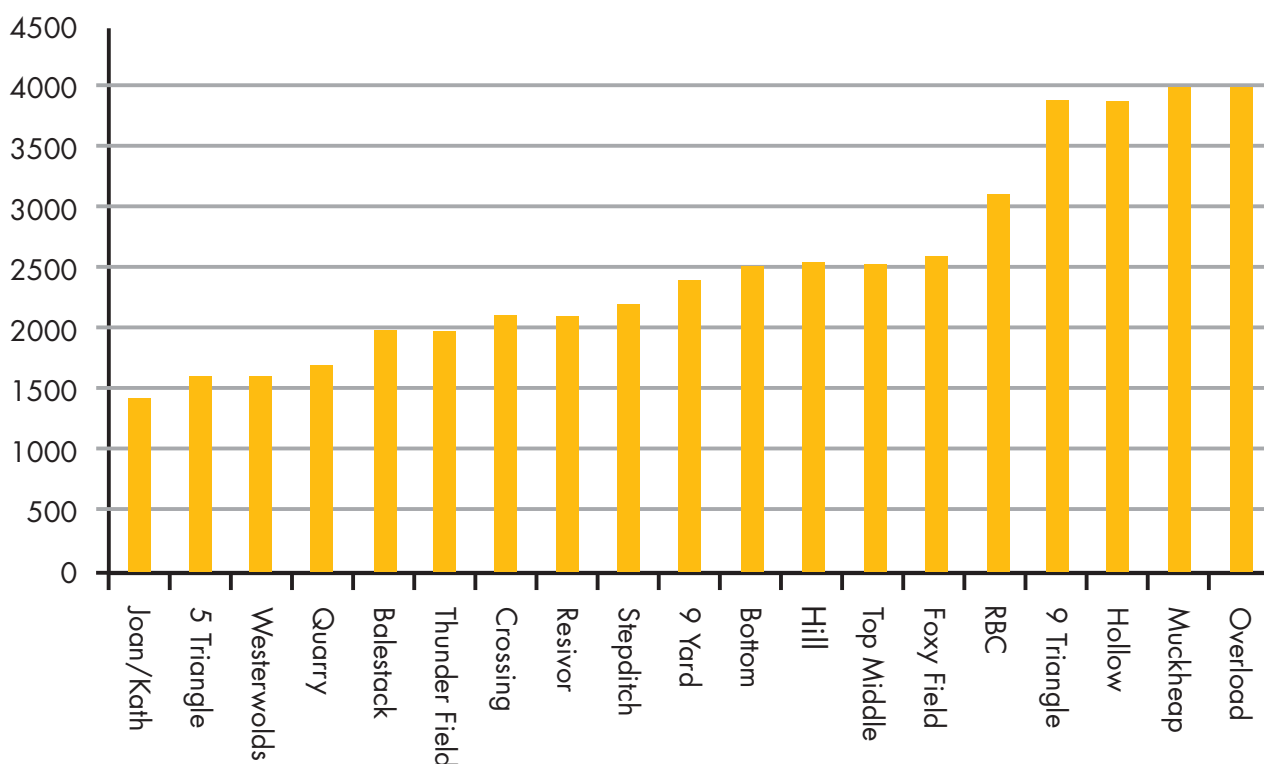
The ideal feed wedge

The feed wedge below was generated in a computer spreadsheet. A line was drawn from the optimum "grazing residual" to the ideal length of grass for the herd to go into – generating the optimum feed wedge for the farm.

If the herd is grazing one paddock in 24 hours, and RBC paddock is left out for silage, will there be enough pasture in nine Yard in five days time if the aim is to put the herd into grass at 2800kg DM/ha?

The paddock would have to grow 300kg DM/ha in five days, ie 60kg DM/ha/day. If this is possible RBC can be skipped and left for silage – if not it may be best grazed by the herd.

Feed Wedge: 13 April



Source: Grassland Challenge (2005), Duchy College Rural Business School.