



What a Season It's Been !!

2026 has caught a few people off guard. The warm spring pushed grass on faster than most expected, and first cuts came thick and fast with some farms already well into their second cut.

That's genuinely good news. An early start is a real opportunity to build silage stocks well ahead of where most farms would normally be at this point in the year, and it's worth recognising that before we get into the management side of things.

But a fast season does demand a bit more from you in return. Ground that's already had first cut needs nitrogen back on promptly — the window between cuts is shorter when things are moving this quickly, and dragging your feet on applications will cost you in yield and quality on the next cut. Sulphur is worth thinking about too. Rapid growth puts high demand on sulphur, and deficiency can show up as pale, underwhelming growth even when nitrogen levels look fine on paper. The two work together, and neglecting sulphur when the season is flying is a false economy.

On grazing ground, the challenge is slightly different — it's less about pushing more growth and more about keeping on top of what's already there. Paddocks can get ahead of stock quickly in conditions like these, and once grass goes stemmy and starts to head out, palatability and quality both drop off. Tight rotation management through May and into June will matter more than usual this year.

It's also worth a quick walk over any ground that went through the forager early in the season when soils were still carrying moisture.

Compaction from machinery can be surprisingly shallow and easily missed, but it does limit how well roots access nutrients and water — and that shows up in recovery speed after cutting.

All in all, it's shaping up to be a season with real potential. The farms that make the most of it will be the ones keeping nutrition and management in step with how fast things are moving.



Product Spotlight:

OptiGraze

21 – 0 – 0 + 1MgO + 3OSO₃ + 8Na

OptiGraze is HumberPalmer's grazing-specific fertiliser, formulated to address the unique nutritional requirements of productive grazing ground. It delivers high-quality nitrogen alongside a sulphur package and, critically, 8% sodium — providing around 8 kg of sodium per acre at a standard 100 kg/acre application. That's a meaningful amount; a lot of products include sodium but at levels so low it barely registers on the pasture.

It also carries HumberPalmer's humic substance base, which as we covered back in March, supports nitrogen use efficiency and soil biology throughout the growing season.

- Grazing-specific formula
- Improves palatability
- HumberPalmer's humic base
- Tighter, more even grazing
- Less rejection & waste
- Available in 600 kg bags



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Grassland Nutrition

Are Your Cows Leaving Grass Behind?

If you're running a rotational grazing system and noticing patches being skipped — especially around older dung areas from the third or fourth round sodium is almost certainly part of the story.

"It doesn't get talked about as much as nitrogen or potassium, but sodium has a real and practical effect on how stock behave at grass."

High potassium levels, common in intensively managed swards, can suppress how much sodium the plant takes up. Less sodium in the plant means less palatability, and animals respond by getting selective — grazing the nice bits and walking past the rest. The knock-on effect is wasted grass, uneven paddocks and a rotation that never quite runs as tightly as it should. On a dairy unit that's grazing hard, this adds up quickly.

Research from the University of Wales Bangor showed that adding sodium to grassland fertiliser lifted daily dry matter intake from 14 to 16.6 kg per animal, increased grazing time and improved D-value. It also raised sugar content in the plant, which is part of why animals graze more willingly. Sheep farmers who've made the switch have noticed similar results — lambs in particular tend to thrive on it.

It's one of those things that's hard to put a precise number on, but farmers who've switched tend to notice the difference pretty quickly in how stock are behaving across the paddocks.

Grassland Tip

Check Before You Spread !

Before fertiliser goes on aftermath ground, it's worth a quick walk across the field — especially headlands and wheel runs from the forager. Even relatively shallow compaction can restrict how well roots access nutrients and water. A pass with an aerator where needed makes a real difference to recovery speed. Don't let nutrient cost be undermined by poor soil conditions.



From the Field

What Farmers Are Seeing

Several dairy farms using OptiGraze have reported noticeably tighter grazing and less rejection on older paddocks. The effect tends to be most obvious from the third grazing round onwards — exactly when selective grazing normally starts to become a problem. Sheep farmers have also picked up on improved lamb performance, which seems to come down to better utilisation of what's in front of them.



Technical Fact

+19%

University of Wales Bangor research found that including sodium in grassland fertiliser increased cattle daily dry matter intake by nearly 19% — from 14 to 16.6 kg per animal per day. Grazing time increased from 8.7 to 9.6 hours, D-value improved from 71.6 to 72.9 and sugar content rose alongside. Across a full grazing season, that kind of improvement in grass utilisation adds up to a significant amount of extra value from the same acres.



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