

COMMON QUALITY INDICATORS FOR FODDER & GRAIN

MOISTURE is the amount of water in the feed, varying from about 10% for grains and to over 80% for fresh pasture.

DRY MATTER (DM) refers to the amount of feed remaining after the water has been removed. Because the water content of feeds can vary considerably, indicators are expressed on a dry matter basis.

CRUDE PROTEIN (CP) is the amount of true protein (composed of amino acids) and non-protein nitrogen in the feed. Whilst it is desirable to have a high CP, it can be misleading to use as the sole measure of feed quality.

DIGESTIBLE DRY MATTER (DDM) is the percentage of the feed dry matter actually digested by animals, estimated using a laboratory method which is standardised against DDM values from feeding trials. High quality feeds have a DDM of over 65%, whilst feeds below 55%DDM are of poor quality and will not maintain liveweight even if stock have free access to it.

METABOLISABLE ENERGY (ME) is the feed energy actually used by the animal, calculated from DDM and expressed as megajoules per kilogram of dry matter (MJ/kg DM). ME is the most important figure on the report. It is used to calculate whether stock are receiving adequate energy for maintenance or production.

ACID DETERGENT FIBRE (ADF) estimates the proportion of the feed that is indigestible to stock. The lower the ADF, the higher the DDM (and ME). ADF is used to calculate DDM where there is limited information available from feeding trials.

NEUTRAL DETERGENT FIBRE (NDF) is the percentage of total cell wall material or plant structure in a feed. Usually, the lower the NDF, the more the animal will eat.

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