



GRAIN FEEDING STOCK THE FINISHING PHASE

The combination of well-priced grain and good sale prices have made grain-feeding a favourable option to finish stock. The finishing phase involves careful monitoring and good feeder management to successfully finish stock and optimise profitability.

Risky Situations during finishing phase:

- **Raw material changes in the ration**

Grain source

- Sudden changes in the grain *type* (e.g. barley to wheat) can potentially lead to acidosis. Starch levels differ between cereal grains and it takes time for the rumen microbes to adapt. If you have to change grain type, shandy together for 10 days.
- Changes in the grain *quality*. Use a similar quality of grain throughout the feeding programme. Changing quality (e.g. F1 to F3 barley) will slow growth, alternatively the sudden introduction of good quality grain may cause health issues.
- Lower grades of grain often result in poor performance due to inadequate supply of energy. Good quality grain is dense and supplies a good source of energy due to higher starch levels.
- Weather damaged grain poses a risk due to mycotoxin load which can poison stock. If in doubt have it tested and use a mycotoxin binder in the grain mix to reduce the risk. Rain pre-harvest also alters the grain structure. This has the effect of decreasing starch levels and increasing sugar levels which amplifies the risk of acidosis.

Roughage source

- Ensure a *palatable* fibre source is used. Weathered damaged hay or straw will not be as palatable and will reduce intake of necessary roughage. Monitor usage.
- Ensure roughage is a good length (5-10cm for cattle). This stimulates cud-chewing, which produces more saliva. Saliva contains buffers to reduce incidence of grain poisoning.

Management:

- **Water supply & spacing**

- Fresh, clean, cool water to be available at all times. A good flow rate is important to ensure all stock are supplied with water quickly.
- Clean troughs regularly. Daily in dusty conditions.
- When using bore water in particular, monitor salt and magnesium levels. High magnesium levels can interfere with calcium absorption and potentially lead to urinary calculi (water belly). Speak to Landmark staff to have your water tested.

Sheep	1.5cm per head
Cattle	3 cm per head

Table 1: Water point spacing requirements.

Rule of Thumb for water intake – stock will typically drink 10% of their bodyweight in water per day. Ensure you have an alternate option to supply water to stock if there is an issue (e.g. pump failure).

- **Feeder space:**

- Minimise shy feeding by ensuring there is enough space for all stock to have access to feed.

	Trough	Self-feeder
Sheep	10 cm	5 cm
Cattle	30 cm	15 cm

Table 2: Feeder space requirements per head:

- **Monitoring:**

Manure

- Observe manure for any changes from 'normal' i.e. colour, texture, grain in manure, bubbles, blood.

Stock behaviour

- Depression, standing alone, lameness and lack of appetite can indicate acidosis.

Weighing stock

- Regular weighing will assist you in determining when your animals are ready for sale. Weighing stock will also provide you with the information on how fast your animals are growing and their FCE.
- Speak to Landmark staff about suitable weigh scales for your system.

Shy feeders and 'poor-doing' stock.

- Consider removing the tail earlier rather than later as it saves on feed costs.

Speak to Landmark staff to customise nutrition requirements, animal management and associated infrastructure to your system.

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