



GRAIN FEEDING STOCK THE INTRODUCTION PHASE

The combination of well-priced grain and good sale prices have made grain-feeding a favourable option to finish stock. One of the most critical phases of grain feeding is the introduction period. It is important we take the time to introduce stock correctly – we will be rewarded with earlier finishing times, less health issues, less deaths and ultimately more profit.

Important tips:

- **Access to palatable roughage**
 - Ruminants have evolved to digest roughage. It is critical that cattle and sheep have free access to a palatable fibre source (hay or straw) at all times.
- **Good water quality**
 - It is imperative that stock have access to fresh, clean, cool water at all times. Water intake drives feed intake which subsequently drives growth.
- **Vaccination to prevent clostridial diseases**
 - Ensure booster vaccination is given at least 10 days prior to introduction to grain.
 - Death from clostridial diseases e.g. Pulpy Kidney occurs quickly and without warning.
- **Slow introduction to grain mix/pellets**
 - Ensure stock are full of hay/straw/dry feed (not hungry) before introduction to grain mix/pellets.
 - Initial introduction to should start at 0.25%-0.5% of the average bodyweight.
 - Slowly increase the grain mix/pellets to provide an amount equal to 2-3% (cattle) and 3-4% (sheep) of average animal bodyweight over 14-21 days.

Symptoms of grain poisoning (acidosis):

- **Reduced or ceased eating, depression, standing alone, scouring, lameness, death. Changes in manure texture, colour & smell.**
 - Manure that is loose (watery), grey coloured, acidic smelling or contain bubbles indicates severe rumen upset caused by acidosis.

Treatment:

- **Remove or reduce grain**
 - Monitor for at least 7-10 days, then slowly increase.
 - In severe cases, drench with 60g magnesium oxide and 15g sodium bicarbonate in 1 litre of water.

- **Feed palatable hay or straw (roughage)**
 - Cereal hay is typically the most palatable.
 - Chewing stimulates saliva production. Saliva contains buffers (bicarbonate and phosphate) to help maintain optimum rumen pH.

Management:

- **Monitor stock behaviour regularly**
- **Rumen Buffering**
 - Sodium Bicarbonate or Acid-Buf™ are suitable buffers to maintain a stable rumen pH.
- **Balancing the grain mix:**

Adding your own additives:

- Limestone inclusion (1%) will assist in balancing the calcium to phosphorus ratio and reducing potential health issues with urinary calculi ('water belly').
- Salt inclusion (0.5%) will supply sodium and chloride and help ensure water intake – essential for maintaining appetite and good growth rates.
- Sodium bicarbonate inclusion (1-2%) will assist to buffer the increased rumen acidity associated with grain feeding.

There is a range of macro minerals and trace elements required for optimum growth and function which are not supplied from this mix. Careful and thorough mixing is also required to ensure an even distribution of additives.

Commercially prepared supplements:

- Commercially prepared grain supplements or 'complete' Lamb Finisher pellets are preferred as they are mixed correctly and contain macro minerals, trace elements and vitamins. They typically contain a buffer and special additives (e.g. Bovatec®) to improve feed conversion efficiency.
- Speak to landmark staff to assist you with your decision.

	% of grain mix
Barley	67-73
Lupins	25
Commercial additive	2-8

Table 1: Typical lamb feedlot ration (add fibre free-choice).

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

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