



Winter Fodder Budgeting and Planning Post Drought

The prolonged dry weather of 2026 has created a serious fodder-planning challenge on many Irish livestock farms. Grass growth has been particularly badly affected in the east, while many farms have already started feeding silage or additional concentrates to maintain stock.

The priority now is clear: **every farmer should complete a winter fodder budget immediately and take action while options are still available.**

Fodder Budget

A fodder budget does not need to be complicated. Farmers need to establish **how much feed is currently available, how many animals will be housed, and how long the expected winter feeding period will be.**

Silage pits should be measured rather than estimated by eye, while bales should be counted. Demand can then be calculated for each class of livestock. Importantly, the target should not simply be enough feed for an "average" winter, providing protection against prolonged housing or another period of difficult weather is important.

If there is a deficit, act now

Finding a shortage in August is a problem that can still be managed. Discovering it in January is a crisis.

Where grass growth recovers, farmers should examine opportunities to build autumn covers, take surplus paddocks as bales or produce an additional silage cut, subject to fertiliser allowances and suitable conditions. Strategic use of slurry can also help supply nutrients and support additional grass growth.

Buying forage is another option, but farmers should investigate supplies early. Purchased silage should be assessed on **quality as well as price**; a cheap bale can become expensive if poor feeding value results in higher concentrate requirements. Feeding straights such as Rolled Oats, Barley or wheat with some protein source to balance will stretch

Alternative Forages

Alternative forages are worth looking at too to see what will help rebuild depleted stock. Firstly **Forage Rye is a good option** and when sown in September it can be cut or grazed before the winter. The crop will continue to grow through the winter, providing options for grazing or zero grazing in spring. If left un-grazed in spring it can be harvested as silage in April.

Italian ryegrass (IRG) sown in early September can also be a useful fodder-recovery option, particularly where a farmer has bare ground available after cereals or another crop. The key qualification is timing: September sowing is increasingly weather-dependent, and the main value may come from **early spring 2027 production rather than expecting a large crop before winter.**

Protect the grass that returns

When rain arrives, there will be a temptation to immediately reduce supplementation. That may be counterproductive. Allowing grass

covers to recover during the first 10–14 days after rain can help rebuild the grazing platform and extend the autumn grazing season.

The key message for farmers is therefore **budget, identify the gap and act early**. After the drought of 2026, hoping that autumn grass or a mild winter will solve a fodder shortage is too great a risk. Every week of delay reduces the available options and potentially increases their cost. Planning now gives farmers the best opportunity to secure feed, control costs and enter the winter of 2026/27 with confidence.



For further information on winter fodder options or options on stretching fodder with straights and rations please contact your Quinns Representative.

What fodder is required on the farm?				
	A	B	C	
Animal Type	No of stock to be kept over Winter	Number of months (Include a 4-6 week reserve	Pit Silage needed tonnes/animals/month	Total of silage needed(AxBxC)
Dairy cows			1.6	0.00
Suckler Cows			1.4	0.00
0.1 Year			0.7	0.00
1-2 Year			1.3	0.00
2 Years +			1.3	0.00
Ewes			0.15	0.00
Total Tonnes Needed				
Total Bales Needed (tonnes multiplied by 1.25)				0.00
Calculate pit silage conserved and silage to be cut				
Silage in the pit	Metres (Length x breadth x settled height) + 1.35 =			Silage in the pit (tonnes) F
				0
LxBxH/1.35=				
Pit silage to be cut	G		H	
	Area (acres)	Yield t/acre	Total yield (t) = (GxH *)	
2nd Cut				
3rd Cut				
Total yield pit silage to be cut				I
Bales	J		K	
	Number of Bales	Yield/Bale	Total yield (t) = (JxK)	
1st and 2nd cut bales		0.8 t/bale		
Surplus Bales		0.8 t/bale		
Total yield baled silage				L
Calculate the surplus/deficit				
Total silage demand (D) minus total silage produced (F, I, L) = D-F-I-L				
% deficit = (deficit in tonnes ÷ total demand in tonnes) x100				



Caring for your flock

As we move through late summer, attention on sheep farms begins to turn towards the next breeding season. While mating may still be a number of weeks away on many farms, the preparation carried out now can have a major influence on conception rates, scanning results and ultimately the number of lambs available for sale next year.

Body condition is one of the first things to check. Ideally, lowland ewes should be around BCS 3.5 at mating. Thin ewes will need time to improve, so identifying them early and giving them priority access to the best grass is far better than trying to correct condition just before the ram goes out.

Carry out a full breeding soundness check.

- **Feet and legs** – persistent lameness should be investigated and treated.
- **Teeth** – poor mouths can prevent ewes maintaining condition.
- **Udders** – check for lumps, damaged or blind teats and evidence of previous mastitis.
- **Previous problems** – ewes with recurring prolapse, persistent health problems or poor mothering records should be considered for culling.
- **Overall condition** – animals that fail to improve despite receiving good nutrition may have an underlying health issue.

For most flocks, good-quality grass should provide the basis of the diet however, with the drought this year grass quality and supply is poor so supplementary feeding may be needed. The important thing is to feed according to condition rather than treating every ewe the same. As a result of the drought this year ewes will not have access to good quality grass for flushing so high energy mineral buckets such as **Crystalux**

High energy and Unitup buckets will be beneficial to have with flocks to keep ewes in good condition pre mating.

The Ram Is Half the Flock

Preparation should not stop with the ewes. A sub-fertile ram can undo months of good flock management in a matter of weeks.

Rams should be checked well in advance of turnout. Teagasc recommends a target **BCS of approximately 4.0** going into the breeding season, as rams can lose considerable condition while working.

Mineral nutrition is another important consideration around breeding.

Cobalt, copper, iodine and selenium are among the principal trace elements of interest in Irish sheep production, and the mineral content of grazed grass can vary considerably during the season.

Quinns stock a range of sheep mineral and supplementation options for animals at grass, alongside ewe and lamb feeds.

For advice on sheep nutrition, mineral supplementation and the Quinns range of ewe and lamb feeds, contact the team at Quinns of Baltinglass or your local Quinns representative.



Scan the QR code for more information on sheep minerals

Special offer
buy 5 get 1 FREE



Feeding Broodmares in Late Summer and Autumn 2026

As we move from late summer into autumn 2026, careful feeding of broodmares becomes increasingly important. Grass growth and nutritional quality can change through August, September and into autumn, so diets should be adjusted according to pasture availability, body condition, stage of pregnancy and individual needs.

For mares in late pregnancy, this is particularly important. Foal growth accelerates during the final trimester, increasing the mare's requirements for energy, quality protein, vitamins and minerals.

Grass and Forage

Monitor pasture closely. With the current weather and lack of rainfall, grass quantity is scarce and the quality is middling to poor at best. Utilise what grass is available and use good quality hay and supplementation to keep horses fed. Forage should remain the foundation of the diet, with a target of at least **1% of body weight in forage dry matter per day**, adjusted for pasture intake and individual needs.

As pregnancy advances, the growing foal takes up more space within the mare, potentially reducing forage intake. Good-quality forage and smaller, regular meals can therefore be beneficial.

Concentrates

During the final trimester, many mares need additional energy and protein beyond what grass and forage provide. **A stud feed formulated for broodmares** can help meet these increased requirements.

Quinns Stud Cubes are an excellent option, containing **14% crude protein** and formulated with Irish-grown cereals balanced with quality protein. They also contain a comprehensive vitamin and mineral package, which is particularly important during late pregnancy.

It contains a really well balanced mineral package with Yeasacc is included to support digestive health and help minimise digestive upsets.

Individual Needs

Every mare is different. Consider body condition, foaling date, pasture quality, age and exercise level when adjusting the diet. Mares due to foal early in 2027 will require particular attention as autumn progresses and pregnancy advances.

Gradual Changes

Introduce hay and concentrates gradually to reduce the risk of digestive upset. Monitor body condition regularly and adjust feeding as pasture availability and pregnancy requirements change.

For mares and foals being weaned in late summer or early autumn 2026, a gradual approach is preferable, ensuring the foal is established on appropriate forage and feed before complete separation.

Good-quality forage, balanced supplementation and careful monitoring now will help support healthy mares and strong foals through autumn 2026 and towards foaling in 2027.



Scan the QR code to find out more about our Equine feed range



Winter Cereal Variety Selection

As the winter cereal planting campaign approaches, selecting the right variety is vital to managing disease pressure, maximising grain yields, and optimising grain quality under Irish conditions. Below is our agronomic breakdown for the coming season.

Winter Wheat

- **Graham:** A highly consistent performer with good standing power. Recommended since 2020, delivering steady yields and good grain quality.
- **Champion:** A high yielding wheat. Offers big yield potential but requires targeted plant growth regulator (PGR) management due to lighter straw strength. Weakness on yellow rust but easily controlled. Fits well as a first wheat if aiming for high yields.
- **Kubik:** Delivers good grain quality with high specific weights. Good straw strength and high yield potential.
- **Rebellion:** Combines rapid spring growth with early maturity. Good on yellow rust with decent yield potential and good straw strength.
- **Fairview:** A versatile, hardy option with excellent straw strength, high yield potential, excellent yellow rust resistance, very high KPH, and good resistance to sprouting.

Winter Barley

- **Joyau:** 6-row conventional with BYDV tolerance. High yielding and early maturing. Good straw strength, early harvesting barley. Weak on mildew.
- **Integral:** 6-row conventional with BYDV tolerance. High yield potential with a good disease resistance profile. Weak on mildew but good straw strength and grain quality.
- **Orcade:** 2-row conventional with BYDV tolerance. A dependable 2-row winter barley with balanced resistance against Rhynchosporium and Net Blotch, coupled with strong straw performance.

- **Tardis:** Established conventional 2-row winter barley, offering steady yields, high specific weight, and stiff straw.
- **Organa:** 2-row conventional with BYDV tolerance. A high-yielding modern addition showing good lodging resistance and disease resistance.

Winter Oats

- **Husky:** The industry benchmark for Irish oat production. Good grain quality, high specific weight, and dependable yields across variable Irish weather.



Please ensure to place your seed order in advance to guarantee desired tonnages and delivery/collection dates.

Contact your Quinns technical sales advisor or local Quinns branch to place your seed orders.

Managing Winter Oilseed Rape

Following a very dry summer, oilseed rape drilling is now underway, and good crop management starts with getting establishment right from day one.

Variety choice is an important first step. Select a variety that best suits the field, local conditions and your rotation. **Aurelia, LG Aviron, LG Armada** and **LG Adapt** are among the main varieties available this season.

Aim to sow at **50 seeds/m²**, reducing to **40 seeds/m²** where establishment conditions are excellent. Seed should be drilled into a firm, fine seedbed at a depth of approximately 2–3 cm to encourage rapid and even emergence.

To maximise yield potential, early nutrition is also important. An application of organic manure **or 2–3 cwt/acre of 10-10-20** can help support strong autumn growth and ensure the crop develops a good Green Area Index (GAI) going into the winter.

For weed control, a pre-emergence application of **Katamaran Turbo** will help give the crop the best possible start. Where seedbeds are particularly dry, or if heavy rainfall is forecast, the application can be delayed until post-emergence when conditions are more suitable.

If crops become very advanced during October, consider applying a suitable fungicide/PGR programme together with boron. This can help manage light leaf spot risk while regulating canopy development and preventing crops from becoming excessively forward before winter.

Getting variety selection, establishment, nutrition, weed control and autumn crop management right provides the foundation for a healthy crop. Combined with favourable weather, these measures will help maximise yield potential at harvest next year.





Celebrating 90 years – Shaping What's Next

2017–2022: Modernising for the Future

2017 – A new pelleting plant opened at Quinns Mill.

2020 – The Lewistown grain facility was expanded.

2022 – A new bagging plant opened in Baltinglass..

Impact: These investments strengthened Quinns' efficiency, quality and innovation, helping keep the business at the forefront of the industry.



**We only use
100% Irish
grain and
pulses in all
our feeds**



Avoca Agristore NEW SHOP

**All
Welcome**

**Friday
September
25th**



- ★ Supplier Stands
- ★ BBQ from 12.30pm – 3pm
- ★ Free Draw
- ★ Special Offers

www.quinns.ie 0402-30783

Follow us on our social media platforms

