



Get to know your feed availability



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Get to know your feed availability with Lely

Feed access is critical to maximising herd productivity. Cows spend around 25% of their time feeding, so ensuring feed availability throughout the day is key. A half-kilo reduction in TMR or PMR intake can result in half a litre of milk loss.



“Feed pushing is a very underestimated job, with these higher yielding Holstein cows that they have food available for them 24/7. Whenever that cow walks up to that trough there’s food there ready to go she mustn’t be expected to wait.

The biggest single change was in cow behaviour, it was almost instant and totally unexpected. Within a couple of weeks we were noticing the cows were calmer and quieter. They are definitely happier cows.”

*Andrew Hurford,
Hornshayne Farm*

Ready to Fix the Feed Gap?

Frequent feeding and pushing has a proven positive effect on overall cow health and milk yield. Speak to your local Lely Center today to see how we can help you utilise your feed as efficiently as possible.

Why should I assess my feed access?

You formulated the diet. You bought the feed. You mixed the ration. Measuring feed access ensures your hard work pays off.

How can I tell if my cows have enough access to feed?

- Measure the distance – a typical Holstein can reach around 60cm (2 feet) from the base of the feed fence to her ration.
- Dominant cows eat in the first 90 minutes after the mixer wagon passes.
- Heifers are wary and eat little and often. They visit the feed fence later in the day.

What impact can reduced feed access have on my cows?

The most obvious impact is reduced milk yield. **Failing to push feed six or more times per day can cost a 150 cow herd up to £1,500/€1,700 per month in lost milk.** But the hazards don't end there.

- Poor herd health – hunger and nutritional deficits reduce immune defences.
- Heifer fertility – forcing heifers away from the feed fence can lead to negative energy balance and reduced fertility.
- Foot health – high competition for feed puts unnecessary pressure on cow's feet.
- Acidosis risk – a diet too high in concentrates affects rumen function.
- Mastitis – pushing for feed space causes dirty feet and legs, which can lead to kicking and dirty udders.

How do I assess my feed access?

We believe all cows should be free to reach their full genetic potential.

Maximising milk yield and farm profitability is key to this. Follow these simple steps to ensure your entire herd is getting access to their ration:

1. Feed the herd as usual.
2. Wait while dominant cows feed.
3. After 90 minutes, use the Lely tape measure to check the gap between the base of the feed fence and your ration mix.
4. How big is the gap? Remember, a mature Holstein can typically reach around 60 centimetres.

Measure again mid-way between feedings. Cows eat around 10 times throughout the day and night, so take a final measurement just before the next feeding.

Your results:

Did any of your measurements equal more than 60 centimetres? If so, are you confident that your lower ranking cows are getting good access to the ration?

Get Social!

Share your *#MindTheFeedGap!* results with us! Use *#MindTheFeedGap* and tag us, *@LelyAtlantic* on Twitter. Give us a follow while you're there for your chance to win a Lely Juno jacket just for taking part!

