

Farm balance sheet on the possible benefits and costs associated with grazing winter crops

	Possible benefits	Possible costs
Grazing considerations		
Feed from crop	High quality dry matter allowing pastures to be spelled at period of peak demand – pages 28, 33	
Pasture growth	Grazing the crop allows the pasture to ‘get away’ – page 11	
Liveweight gain	Positive weight gain but may require mineral supplementation – page 56	Cost of mineral, fibre and/or energy supplementation – page 56
Stocking rate	Whole farm stocking rates can potentially be increased, but it is often difficult to match stock numbers to the short grazing period – pages 6, 39	Requires purchase / breeding of extra livestock – page 41 May require temporary fencing to achieve even grazing of the crop – page 42
Supplementary feeding	Should be reduced as the crop provides an alternative feed source – page 28	
Animal health	Reduced worm burden as pastures are free at peak contamination period	May get slight increase in mortalities – page 58
Soil compaction		Grazing when wet may lead to increased pugging and soil structure decline
Crop considerations		
Grain yield	May increase compared to no grazing by conserving soil moisture from earlier in the year that is used at grain fill – page 49	Yield will be decreased if grazing after growth stage 30. Yield may be reduced in short growing season areas or where the season finishes early – page 49
Grain quality	Grazing will reduce protein levels in barley enabling the grain to reach malting quality – page 52	May require additional nitrogen inputs after grazing
Hay / silage		Will be reduced due to grazing – page 53
Stubble	Stubble will be reduced which may help reduce sowing difficulties where stubbles are not burnt – page 55	Reduces stubble if straw is to be baled. May increase soil exposure – page 55
Crop maturity	Will be delayed which may avoid exposure to late frosts and exposure to early rust infections – pages 47, 64	Will be delayed which may expose crop to moisture stress late in the season – page 48

Fertiliser		Likely to require additional fertiliser after grazing to ensure maximum grain yield
Weeds	Grazing may increase the incidence of some weeds e.g. annual ryegrass – page 59	Grazing may reduce the incidence of some weeds e.g. wild radish. Slows canopy closure may advantage other weeds. Early sowing of cereals to maximise DM may reduce herbicide knockdown efficacy – page 59
Disease	May reduce rust by reducing crop canopy and removing leaves that may cause later infections – page 64	
Management considerations		
Matching stock numbers to feed on offer	If well matched, will enable more stock to be run or supplements to be reduced – pages 6, 34, 39	If poorly matched, crops may be grazed unevenly or not utilised to their full potential – pages 39,
Economic considerations		
Management	May allow for a trading operation to be conducted to help diversify – page 6	May require ‘boxing’ of mobs to obtain adequate grazing pressure – page – page 38
Fencing		May require temporary fencing – page 42
Gross margins	Increases if the grazing value outweighs silage, hay or grain reductions – page 7	Increases if a reduction in silage, hay or grain outweighs the grazing value – page 7