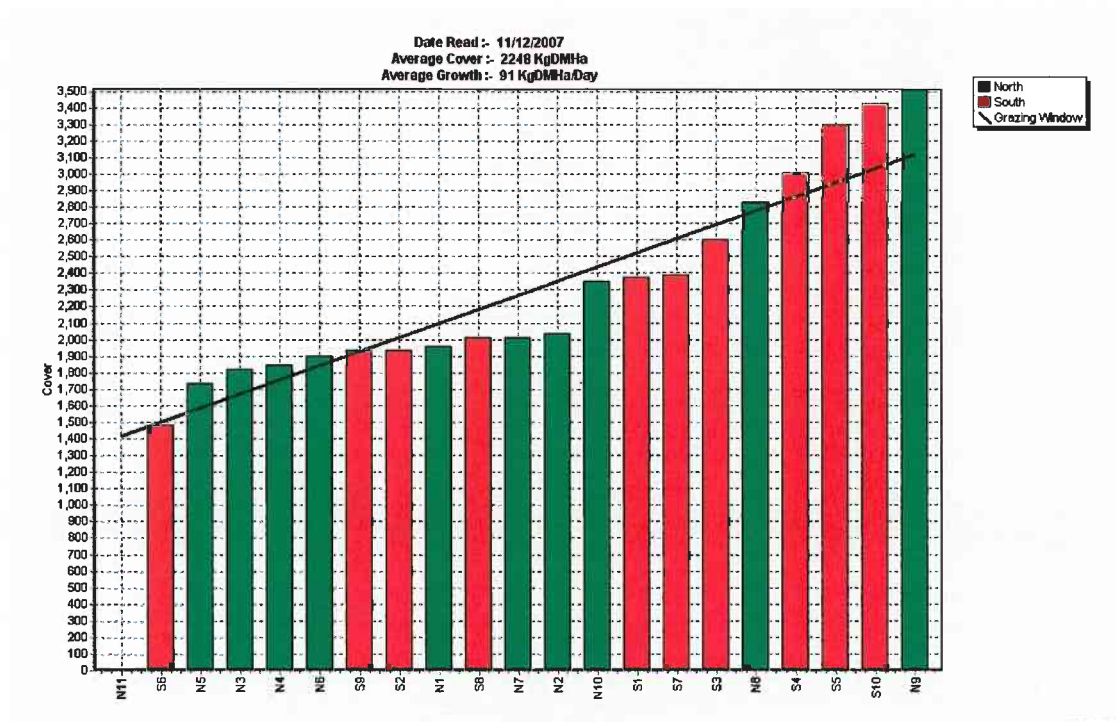


Silage making decisions



When faced with a Pasture wedge as above in 2005/06 we had a policy of being aggressive with making silage and did not want the cows to graze any paddocks that were longer than the target pre-grazing. Hence we would have immediately made one or two paddocks of silage but also held the grazing round. This resulted in 1.4t DM/ha of silage being made off the grazing platform and at the end of the financial season we were challenged about the economics of this. Our production/cow and /ha was the farm record (still is) but our silage making costs had risen markedly. We were challenged to find a compromise.

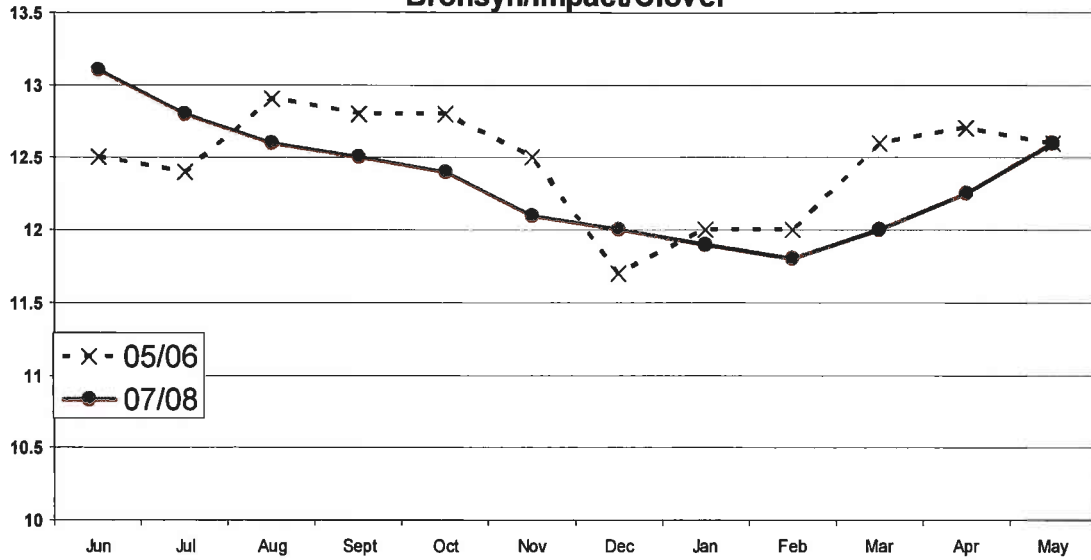
The 2006/07 season was a colder one and we grew almost 2t less grass/ha during the first 2/3rds of the season. This meant that we had very few surpluses and so did not have the ability to try out a different strategy for making silage.

The 2007/08 season, however, had a similar growth pattern to the 2005/06 from early October on and so we were able to try out the new silage protocols. When faced with a pasture wedge as above, we would not make silage straight away but would slow down the grazing round and eat through the short term surplus. We would still hit the target grazing residuals and would push the grass ahead of us. This increased the time before we got to the paddocks that were shown to be in deficit on the wedge.

The results of this strategy were

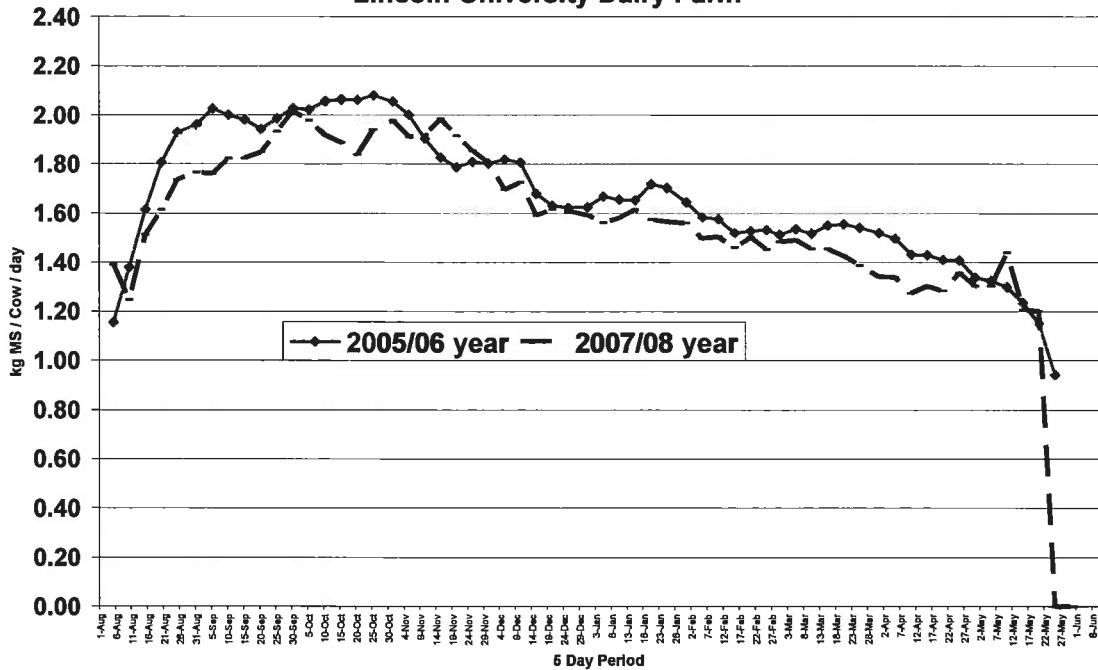
- 1) Much less silage conserved (0.4 tDM/ha compared with 1.4t DM/ha) even though we grew only 200 kg DM/ha less grass in 2007/08 as in 2005/06.
- 2) Cost savings of about \$24,000 (15c /kgDM making and feeding out costs)
- 3) Pasture of lower ME (digestibility) was offered to cows for long periods of time.

LUDF Pasture ME Bronsyn/Impact/Clover



4) Lower production

Lincoln University Dairy Farm



The loss in production from October to March was 15,600 kgs MS

5) Loss of earnings – At a \$7.67 payout this was a cost of \$119,652

6) Loss of profit of \$119,652 – \$24,150 = \$95,475

Strategy for conserving silage season 08/09.

The lesson that we have learned is that there is a big price to be paid for not being aggressive at removing surplus grass from the grazing round.

This year if a paddock has a cover above the target pre-grazing height we will remove it and make silage as soon as possible, immediately if possible, even if the wedge looked like the one above.

However, we would also take notice of the potential surplus appearing at the lower end of the wedge. In this case we will speed up the round (possible to 1/19th a day) during the few days we are grazing the paddocks with not enough cover, and then slow down back to 1/21st a day. This is a higher risk strategy and can only happen if a short deficit is followed by paddocks growing faster than demand.

In the longer term, making more silage indicates to us the need to increase stocking rate a little more.