

# BRASSICA

## FEEDING GUIDE

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DAIRY

BEEF

SHEEP

SILAGE

## Tools needed

- Length of alkathine 2.66m or slightly shorter to accommodate a joiner.
- Join the ends together to form a ring, this creates an area of 0.5m<sup>2</sup>.
- Empty seed bag
- Knife or other cutting instrument
- Hand-held scales
- Paper and pen/pencil
- Calculator

## Take five to six samples per field

Choose the sample areas from parts of the field which are representative of the entire field and throw the alkathine ring onto the crop.

- Any stem/bulb bases that fall within the ring circumference are counted to be within the sample area (0.5m<sup>2</sup>)
- Any leaf/branches that belong to a plant with a stem base that is outside the ring are to be excluded from the material being weighed
- Remove all material by either cutting the crop down to about 1 inch from the ground e.g. for kales or pulling bulbs and leaves (ensuring dirt is removed) from swedes and turnips, put into bag and weigh.

## Once all the samples have been taken use the following formula:

1. Collate sample weights (kg) and take average.  
Eg. 5.3, 5.6, 5.4, 5.9, 5.8 Average weight = 5.6 kg
2. Multiply by 2 to get kg/m<sup>2</sup>.  
Eg. 5.6kg x 2 = 11.2 kg/m<sup>2</sup>
3. Multiply by 10,000 to convert to kg/ha (there are 10,000m<sup>2</sup>/ha).  
Eg. 11.2 kg/m<sup>2</sup> x 10,000 m<sup>2</sup>/ha = 112,000 kg fresh material/ha
4. Multiply by appropriate DM% (see sensitivity table below)  
112,000 kg fresh material/ha x e.g. 10%DM = 11,200 kgDM/ha

It is important to know the correct dry matter percentage as small differences in DM percentages can account for big differences in feed available as shown below.

To work out how long the feed available will last and how much feed to offer daily, farmers need to know the requirements of the animal, below is an example in hectares to keep it simple.

The crop of turnips produce 12,000kg DM/ha and the farmer has 100 lactating cows which have a requirement of 5kg per head/day and assuming the utilisation of turnips is 80% (12,000kg DM x 0.80 = 9,600kg (down throat)).

100 cows x 5kg = 500kg of DM consumed per day

9,600kg offered / 500kg = 19.2 days

Therefore the hectare area should be split into 19 days breaks to achieve the 500kg feed needed.

kg fresh matter	11% DM	12% DM	13% DM	14% DM	15% DM
112,000	12,320	13,440	14,650	15,680	16,800

### Sensitivity Table



## NOTES TO REMEMBER

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It is always more efficient to break feed brassicas on a measured allowance per day rather than just “opening the gate.”

Sometimes this just isn't practical given the topographic nature of the field, e.g. size, steepness. However in that case it is still important to restrict stock into blocks rather than just giving them the run of the field.

Getting a break through well grown kale fields can be problematic, but some innovative farmers anticipate the issue by sowing the break lines in swedes, or spray lines early in the crops establishment, or running lines of baleage across field breaks.

The only issue with anticipating where your break lines will be, is that depending on the quality and quantity of the resultant crop, you will need to set stocking rates according to the break size, rather than being able to set breaks at the time of feeding, depending on stock numbers that require feeding.

A long narrow face is also more efficient than a short wide one. This is especially true when feeding cattle. If there is not enough space, some cattle are going to get more than the planned allowance, some unfortunately aren't going to get enough.

If you are focussed on feeding stock adequately over winter you need to know how much crop (total dry matter per hectare) you have and the only way to know this is to measure it and preferably accurately, by getting a dry matter test.

Guessing the DM is best avoided as it can have a major effect on the accuracy of the amount of feed being offered if wrong. For example a kale crop with a wet weight of 120000kgs per hectare will have 14.4 tonnes available DM per ha at 12% DM, but if it's at 15% DM, there is 18 tonnes. That's a lot of feed that might not be utilised efficiently if you guess incorrectly.

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