

# Automatic grass plate meter

## Need:

- Timely weaning
- Outdoor condition / barn condition to monitor / adapt

## Aim:

- To measure and manage grassland grazing

## Description:

Automatic plate measure that measures and records compressed sward height, to help inform grazing management decisions. The information collected allows the average amount of grass available in kilograms of dry matter per hectare (kg DM/ha) to be calculated.

Data can often be transferred to mobile devices and farm software packages. Depending on the type of measure used, they may also be used with GPS technology, linked to farm maps, to identify individual paddocks/fields.

## How to Implement:

Once the plate meter has been set-up and linked to an associated app (if applicable), the device should be ready to start measuring. Once in the field, move a few metres away from any fences/gateways and place the plate on top of the pasture, with as little pressure as possible. Start walking across the field taking regular measurements as you go.

A common and recommended method is to walk the field in a W shape, collecting 30 – 40 measurements per field. However, more measurements may be required if there is a lot of variation within the field.

Once you have taken the number of measurements you want, the device will provide you with an average kg DM/ha value. The data can then be transferred to a software package of your choice, to allow informed decisions to be made as to how best to use the grass available. The information can be used to calculate the total available grass in the paddock/field, total growth since the last measurement was taken and average daily growth etc.



Country:

UK



**Production System  
(dairy or/and meat  
sheep/goat):**

All

**Category of Animal  
(ewe, goat,  
replacement, lamb,  
kid):**

All

**Source of  
Information:**

**Attachment/Links:**

**Farmers Weekly  
Video– How to use a  
plate meter:**

[How to use a plate meter \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aB1UzL_eTNA)

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### Expected Benefits:

- Once set-up, easy to collect measurements.
- Monitoring grass growth
- Allocating grazing resources to different groups of animals
- Useful for rotational grazing systems
- Utilising grass efficiently
- Feed budgeting
- Reseeding decisions

### Costs and Challenges

- Set up costs ~ 501 – 1,000 Euro
- Subscription required: No
- Regularly collected measurements increase accuracy and benefits.
- If there is a lot of variation within the field, more measurements may be required.
- Make sure grass doesn't become stuck in the sensor below the plate.
- Mainly useful for improved and/or semi-improved grazing. Might not be so practical for extensive hill ground grazing.
- Ease of use? Scale 1 (Complicated) – 10 (Simple)



- Value for money (for this type of benchmark farm)? Yes
- Recommend this tool/technology for use on other types of farm? Yes



*This tech works for me because it allows me to allocate my fields to different animals, based on their requirements and the availability of grass.*

FARMER FROM UNITED KINGDOM



**It would take 11 years for a peak adoption rate of 90%.**



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