

# Information Notes

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## Relative Feed Values

At his time of increasing feed prices, which vary from day to day, it is important that the value of alternatives that are being considered is taken into account. The relative value of feeds can be calculated by comparing their composition with that of standard feeds. For ruminant animals it is usual to use barley and rapeseed meal as the standards and compare feeds on the basis of the cost of energy and protein relative to these standards. Assuming that barley costs £150/t and rapeseed meal £160/t then the relative values of a range of feeds are as follows:

Feed	Relative value (£/t)
Wheat	156
Beans	163
Peas	169
Draff	33
Malt distiller's dark grains	151
Wheat distiller's dark grains	180
Sugar beet pulp	143
Maize gluten feed	157
Pot ale syrup	97
Wheatfeed	130
Potatoes	37
Swedes	20
Hipro soya bean meal	200
Sunflower meal	154

It should be noted that these values are based on the energy and protein content of the feeds only and do not take into account other attributes of the feeds: for example, positive attributes such as the energy in the form of digestible fibre supplied by sugar beet pulp or the digestible undegradable protein supplied by soya bean meal or potential problems such as the difficulty in handling liquids (e.g. pot ale syrup).

The above table can assist in the decision to buy an alternative feed: if its relative value is greater than its price then it is a good buy.

Producers should also take into account other factors when considering an alternative feed, such as:

- Limits to its use: consideration must be given to the class of stock it is intended for; its chemical composition (e.g. high starch) and how well it will combine with other feeds in the ration
- Variability in its composition
- Availability/variability in its supply
- Transport/storage (especially wet feeds)
- Suitability in farm assurance schemes.

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