



How can we assess whether we're going to run out of forage?

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Before considering sometimes costly strategies to increase forage stocks, it's best to assess whether a real shortage is expected in the coming year. Early estimates will provide a more interesting choice of strategies to consider. Regular monitoring of forage inventories throughout the year will allow you to readjust your strategy to ensure your forage stocks won't run out.



To estimate your forage stocks:

1. Evaluate the current inventory (number of bails, horizontal and vertical silos, etc.)
2. Add the predicted yield for the rest of the season based on projected yields.
3. Subtract 10 % from these calculations as a safety margin to account for losses during storage and feed out.

Our advisors have the right tools to help you calculate your inventory. Call on them for advice!

Estimating the needs:

1. Determine annual forage consumption by animal type

For this item, there are two possible options. The first is to rely on the data from your herd's ration for each group of animals. You can then multiply the daily quantity of forage by 365 to obtain the annual quantity to be served. Averages can also be used ([Table 1](#)).

2. Multiply the number of animals by the yearly forage intake of each group
3. Add the annual total for each group of animals to determine the herd's annual forage intake.

Table 1. Forage needs for Holstein Herds

Type of Animal	Forage Intake
	(t DM/animal/year)
Cow (low producer) ¹	5,1
Cow (average producer) ¹	5,5
Cow (high producer) ¹	5,8
Replacement Animals ²	3,0

1. [Évolution de la production laitière québécoise 2019](#)

2. *Lactanet internal data.*

Comparing needs with stocks :

1. Divide the stocks by the herd's annual forage intake, always in terms of tons of dry matter (t DM)
2. Multiply this result by 365, which will determine the availability of forage in terms of days of supply.
3. Add the number of days of supply to the current date to determine when the inventory will run out.

Taking action

If the result of the calculations suggests a shortage of stock before next year's first cut, there are several possible solutions. We have put together lists of strategies for you to explore, both [in the field](#) and [in the barn](#).



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