

How much is soil compaction costing per acre?

Mild compaction can easily result in a reduction in yield of 10-20% through a range of mechanisms – (poor root growth, reduced fertiliser recovery, increase denitrification). If we assume a productive ryegrass ley can produce 10t Dry Matter (DM/ha/yr) – and a moderately compacted ley only 8t DM/ha/yr (with the same input costs). With current input costs, 1t DM is currently “worth” around £100 as ensiled grass (10p/kgDM) - or around £55 (5.5p/kgDM) as grazed grass. So soil compaction can cost of between £100 and £200 per hectare/yr in terms of reduced yields

Why are there no worms in my soil? –

Areas on farms with low soil pH and temporary waterlogging create anaerobic conditions that worms are not able to live and grow and multiply in. They will move from these areas where possible to soils with free flowing air and water and where soil is more alkaline.

When is the best time to use slitters/lifters to correct compaction?

While soil management techniques like slitters and lifters can be valuable tools it is vital that soil conditions are right. Soils need to be dry to prevent smearing and promote cracking and also operations should be carried out ideally after peak grass growth to limit damage to the growing grass sward. For this reason if the weather is dry, September or October are ideal months for this activity. If conditions allow March can be an option provided clover is well established and has overwintered well.

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