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Thomas Curran
Regional Manager
Teagasc Cork West



Monitor farmers are critical to demonstrating good farming practice to other dairy farmers in the region. Each month we will feature one monitor farm family from the Carbery, Dairygold or Signpost Programme covering dairy, beef and sheep. Our January profile features **Stephen and Hillary Buttimer**

A busy month for Ballineen duo Stephen and Hillary



STEPHEN and Hillary Buttimer are farming in Ballineen with their two sons Brian and Ethan. They milk 117 cows through a 16-unit parlour and supply Lisavaird co-operative. The farm in total is 84 hectares and the cow grazing area is 42ha, giving a milking platform stocking rate of 2.78cows/ha. There is also eight ha of tillage. The herd EBI is €179 and the replacement heifers are €206. The herd supplied 525kg of milk solids per cow to Lisavaird Co-op in 2021 at 4.08% fat and 3.45% protein. The replacement heifers are reared on the farm. It is a spring calving herd with 89% of the herd due to calve in six-weeks this spring. The Buttimers are planning for the highest labour demand period of the year, with spring calving due to start in late January. 83 cows and heifers are due to calve in the first three weeks of the month.

Recently, they walked me through every aspect of their workload so we could see where they can reduce the number of labour hours needed each day and streamline everything to make this busy period easier to manage. Cows near calving will be housed separate to the main herd and will have reduced access to silage during the day.

Silage will be fed in the late evening. They have used this strategy in the past and it has been successful in reducing the calvings between midnight and 6am. Cows will be drafted to the calving shed every few days. Freshly calved cows will be kept in a separate group and milked last, until their milk is fit for the milk tank. Then they will join the main milking group. Calves will stay in individual pens for as short a time as possible (until they are trained to drink), before going into a group pen. There is less time required feeding calves in group pens compared to individual pens. Bull calves will be sold younger than past years. They will make less money, but when one adds up the cost of the feed and labour hours gone into them, it's at best a break-even situation. The replacement heifer calves will be fed once per day from three weeks of age. This will be done separate to milking time. School-goers Ethan and Brian have full responsibility for certain jobs, so everyone helping knows what to do and no time is wasted. The herd will be milked once per day for the first month, in the late afternoon.



Stephen and Hillary's children have full responsibility for certain jobs, so everyone helping knows what to do and no time is wasted.

There will only be a small reduction in overall yield for the year, as the period is at the start of lactation. This will have the biggest labour saving. Fresh milk for young calves will be held overnight for feeding the following morning. All calf and calving houses are washed out, disinfected and ready for the season. Calving jacks, ropes, navel disinfectant, tags and other supplies

are in their rightful storage places so nobody will have to go searching for them when they're needed. Mark Treacy with Teagasc in Clonakilty is the farm advisor to the Buttimer family.

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Tractors	Tillage	Feed Equipment
New Claas Arion 610 CIS 40K (145HP) New Claas Arion 450 (130HP) Demo Claas Axion 830 CIS+ c/w Links/PTO '201 Claas Arion 510 (125HP) c/w Loader (150 hours) '181 Claas Axion 810 (215HP) - 1500 hours '171 Claas Arion 640 (175HP) - 3800 hours 161 Axos (100HP) 1000H '161 Claas Arion 640 (175HP) - Choice of 2 '131 Case Puma 160 - 6200 hours '09 Deutz 150.7 - 9000 hours 2009 Arion 630 CIS 40K	Full Range of He-Va and Berthoud Equipment in stock, finance available Berthoud 3200L 24M Trailed Spray (Tested)	Trioliet 14 cu Demo Trioliet 18 cu 2 in stock 8cu Feedall Tub Keenan 100 Keenan 140 (x3) Keenan 320 b/h Keenan 340 (x2) Strautmann Tub cu Full Range of Trioliet Tub feeders in stock
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