

Teagasc Dairy Beef Programme

Update, Johnstown Castle

Date of writing: 4th Jan 2019

Covering period: November/December 2018

Conditions at grass remained good late autumn, and younger cattle got to stay out until early November. November and December brought a lot of rain, which more than made up for the deficit in the summer. Winter fodder on the farm was tight, but 200 bales of silage were secured and drawn from Oakpark which helped to reduce the deficit. The steers and the weanlings are all receiving 2 kg of concentrate in their winter diets which is helping to stretch the forage available. The fear of pneumonia is quite high with the mild conditions over the Christmas period, but luckily only one animal has had to be treated thus far. If conditions remain good it is hoped to get cattle out early March.

	Nov 2018	Dec 2018
Rainfall (ml)	204.4	179.3
Mean temp (°C)	8.9	8.7
Mean 10cm soil temperature (°C)	8.1	7.8

Animal performance:

Older Cattle

- The majority of the 2017 born heifers were sold late October and November at 20 months of age;
 - 22 heifers were killed in October before the cattle were housed. The rehoused heifers were put on a diet of 9 kg concentrate, 16 kg silage and 1.5 kg straw.
 - 62 heifers were then killed in November.
- The remaining 22 heifers are going to the factory on the 14th January.
- On average the heifers gained 1.44 kg/day over their second period indoors.
- The steers are doing well during their second winter, with their diet amended to 2 kg concentrates and 28 kg silage at the end of November.
 - They were dosed and vaccinated for blackleg on the 8th November.
 - Fluke dosed on the 6th December.

Heifer performance (to date)

	Final LW (kg)	CW (kg)	Conformation Score (1-10)	Fat Score (1-10)
High	520	254	5.5 (O=/O+)	8.7 (3=/3+)
Medium	517	252	5.8 (O=/O+)	8.2 (3=)
Low	530	256	5.6 (O=/O+)	9.1 (3+)

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Steer performance

	8 th Nov	6 th Dec	ADG 2nd Season
High	500	527	0.99
Medium	500	530	1.05
Low	518	568	1.02

Weanlings

- The calves performed well at grass, gaining 0.84 kg/day on average during their first season.
- They were housed on the 6th November, averaging 243 kg. Upon housing they were fed 3 kg conc., 2 kg straw and 9 kg silage (fresh weight).
- The calves were reweighed on the 9th November, dosed and vaccinated for both blackleg and pneumonia. They averaged 255 kg.
- The calf diet was changed to 12 kg silage and 2 kg concentrates at the end of November once the winter forage stocks were established.
- The calves were weighed on the 11th December and given a fluke dose and clostridial booster vaccine on the 17th December.

	6 th Nov (housing)	9 th Nov	11 th Dec
High	242	255	286
Medium	247	260	278
Low	242	250	286

Grass Management:

- Silage results were returned in November and were very good for both cuts -
 - Pit 1: 32% DM, 15% CP, 10.25 MJ/kg ME
 - Pit 2: 28.2% DM, 16% CP, 10.5 MF/kg ME
- Grass growth for first week in November averaged 25 kg DM/ha/day, with grass DM ~19% and pre-grazing yields low at ~800 kg DM/ha. As there were only calves out at this point, and they were receiving 2.4 kg conc./head /day, these low covers were sufficient for a short period, but the calves were housed a few days later as grass supplies teetered out.
- The closing farm cover was completed on the 7th November, with an average farm cover of 439 kg DM/ha.
- With conditions dry and grass growing with the mild weather, a farm cover will be taken early in January to see what the level of cover is on the farm.
- Soil sampling will begin in January to establish a nutrient management plan.