

Teagasc Dairy Beef Programme

Update, Johnstown Castle

Date of writing: 4th March 2019

Covering period: January/February 2019

The dry and mild early spring has allowed the beef farm to build up a good grass cover, considering how low the farm cover was at closing. For the first year in many, the younger cattle were let out mid-February for two weeks, but when the weather broke they had to be returned indoors for a period. A number of the two-year old bullocks have become fit and will be killed before they are due to be turned out in March.

	Jan 2019	Feb 2019
Rainfall (ml)	43.5	61.7
Mean temp (°C)	6.3	7.7
Mean 10cm soil temperature (°C)	5.5	6.1

Animal performance:

Older Cattle

- The remaining heifers were killed on the 14th January, averaging 501 kg live weight with 250 kg carcass weight (49.9% KO), O=/O+ conformation score and 3+ fat score.

Heifer performance by Stocking Rate (Average results)

	Final Live weight (kg)	Carcass weight (kg)	KO%	Age at slaughter	Conf. Score	Fat Score
High	510	249	48.9%	643.6	O=	3=/3+
Medium	515	252	49.0%	643.1	O=/O+	3=/3+
Low	528	257	48.6%	635.3	O=/O+	3+

Heifer performance by Breed (Average results)

	Final Live weight (kg)	Carcass weight (kg)	KO%	Age at slaughter	Conf. Score	Fat Score
AAX	518	251	48.4%	641	O=	3=/3+
HEX	523	254	48.7%	636	O=	3+
LMX	514	254	49.6%	645	O+	3=

- On average the heifers gained 1.23 kg/day over their finishing period, with those that went indoors gaining 1.4kg/day during that short second wintering period.
- The steers are doing well during their second winter; the end of January they were fed 30kg silage and 2 kg concentrates. Towards the end of February, they were cut back to 1 kg in preparation for turnout.
- The bullocks were body condition scored on the 18th February and 43 were found to be fit.

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These will be killed early March. The remaining 65 bullocks will be put out to grass with no meal in March when weather permits.

Steer performance, 2nd winter

	11 Jan 19	15 Feb 19	ADG 2 nd Winter
High	555	581	0.89
Medium	569	600	1.08
Low	578	586	0.82

Yearlings

- The yearlings are performing well. Their silage allowance was increased to 17kg from 12 kg as the winter period progressed, alongside 2 kg concentrates.
- The yearlings were reduced to 1kg of concentrates (with 17 kg silage) for one week prior to turnout on the 14th February.
- At turnout, the yearlings averaged 324 kg (empty weight).
- Unfortunately, due to weather condition, the yearlings were rehoused on the 1st march, however it is hoped to get them out as soon as conditions allow.

	09 Jan 19	05 Feb 19	14 Feb 19	ADG 2 nd Winter
High	308	330	327	0.79
Medium	305	326	321	0.71
Low	307	320	233	0.75

Grass Management:

- Grass growth for first week in January averaged 8 kg DM/ha/day, with an average farm cover of 975 kg DM/day on the experimental ground.
- The farm was soil sampled and a nutrient management plan will be drawn up.
- Soiled water and slurry was spread on 15 paddocks on the 17 & 18th January at a rate of 1800 gallons/acre. Paddocks that did not receive slurry received KAN (46%) between the 5th and 11th February at a rate of 65 kg/ha.
- The yearlings were let out to grass on the 14th February in groups of 24.
- Fertiliser spreading began yesterday (5th Feb). KAN is being spread at a rate of 65kg/ha on any paddock that has not received slurry.

Farm cover 22/02/2019

	Growth/ha	Demand/ha	Farm Cover	Grazing Area	Total LU	LU/ha	Days Ahead
	Kg DM/ha/day	Kg DM/ha/day	Kg DM/ha	Ha			
High	21	32	825	22.32	50.4	2.26	39
Medium	38	29	865	24.26	50.4	2.08	46
Low	31	27	988	26.76	50.4	1.88	58

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Health:

- Thankfully there has been no major health incidences over the indoor period so far, with no respiratory/pneumonia issues.
- There were two casualties in the older cattle in January; one bullock had to be killed as he was a TB reactor, while another broke its leg and had to be put down.
- A number of yearlings became lame on the slats. They were treated, put on straw for a few days and returned to the slats when they recovered.

