

Teagasc Dairy Beef Research Programme

Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford

Update: April 2020

Drier and warmer weather saw grass growth increase in April and allowed for reseeded to take place before the end of the month. A total of 50.5 ml of rain fell, with soil temperatures averaging 9.8 °C. Cattle are performing well at grass, and trial calves continue to arrive on the farm.

Animal Performance:

2 year old steers

- Due to the initial Covid19 lockdown restrictions, we were unable to get a 4-day reweigh post turnout on the bullocks and yearlings at the end of March. However, we were able to weigh the bullocks on the 15th April, and they averaged 547 kg.
- The bullocks will begin their finishing period mid-May; they will be built up to 3 kg/head/day of a 14% beef finisher ration with the aim to be killed by the end of June after 6 weeks of supplementation at grass.

Yearlings

- The yearlings were also weighed on the 15th April. They averaged 322 kg, gaining ~0.9kg/day since turnout.

	Heifers	Steers
High	317 kg	333 kg
Medium	315 kg	321 kg
Low	321 kg	326 kg

Spring 2020 calves

- By the end of April, there were 177 trial calves on the farm, with the last due to arrive in the first week of May.
- These calves were, on average, 29 days of age at arrival (average birth date is 28/02/2020), and weighed 57.2 kg.
- The older calves are being fed milk once a day at grass, the younger calves are indoors, also being fed once a day, and will be put out to grass at 5-6 weeks of age. Calves will be weaned once they reach 100 kg and are eating over 1 kg of concentrate per day.



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Grassland Management

- On the 21st April, the average farm cover sat at 1067 kg DM/ha.
- Due to the later spring turnout, some paddocks got too strong to graze and so have been cut as surplus silage bales. Four paddocks were cut for bales this month; 1 low paddock was harvested on 7th April and yielded 4811 kg DM/ha, 1 medium and 2 low paddocks were cut on the 21st April and yielded 4554, 4536 and 4212 kg DM/ha respectively. No high paddocks have been cut for surplus bales.
- Paddocks were closed for silage the first week of April; ~42% of each of the farmlets were closed. The aim is to harvest a week earlier than previous years (i.e. cut by the 15th May).

Table 2. Farm cover, 21st April 2020

	Farm cover	Growth/ha	Demand/ha	Grazing area	Silage cut later	Total LU	LU/ha	Days ahead
	Kg DM/ha	Kg DM/ha/day	Kg DM/ha/day	Ha	Ha			
High	922	40	66	9.39	6.76	66.4	7.07	14
Med	1251	25	60	10.00	7.67	65.4	6.54	21
Low	1220	37	52	11.32	8.24	64.4	5.69	23

- This month, approximately 10.5 ha in the Beef Unit were reseeded as part of the new multispecies trial. A total of 12 paddocks were sprayed off on the 10th April. Two weeks later, the paddocks were disced twice and power harrowed (with a day between operations to allow the sod to dry out and break up before harrowing). Two tonne of lime and fertiliser (1, 2.25 or 3 bags of 0-10-20 per acre depending on soil P test status) were spread. The seedbed was then ring-rolled and power harrowed a second time before the seed was broadcast with an Einbock seeder and rolled to finish.



Paddocks after being disced twice and one run of the power harrow

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Paddocks after seeding, before final rolling

