

Teagasc Dairy Beef Research Programme

Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford

Update: February 2020

February has been extremely wet; 153 ml of rain fell over the course of the month, which was >90 ml more than February 2019. Ground conditions have been poor across the farm; some slurry was spread early February but no nitrogen has been applied. Mean soil temperature for the month was 5.6 °C. Cattle remain indoors on silage only; the second pit of silage will be empty by mid-March so the remaining surplus bales will be fed out if grazing conditions do not improve.

Animal Performance:

22 month old steers

- The steers have performed well considering the quality of the silage this year. They have been fed *ad lib* silage only over the winter, with the quality of the first and second cut pit being 69 and 63 DMD according to commercial lab results.
- 50 steers were killed on the 10th February having come fit over the winter on silage only.

Table 1. Slaughter results of steers killed in February 2020

	No. Killed	Live weight	Carcass weight, kg	Conf.	Fat	Value €
Angus	25	639	306	O-	3=/3+	1092.53
Hereford	20	630	299	O-/O=	3+	1083.52
Limousin	5	653	317	O=	3=/3+	1180.51

- The remaining steers were weighed on the 26th February; they averaged 561 kg. There are a few fit to kill before turn out; these will be drafted out for slaughter early March.
- The steers ADG dropped slightly this month, which was expected considering were moved to the lower quality pit after Christmas. They are still maintaining, averaging 0.4-0.5 kg/day for the period, and it is hoped to have them out to grass before the end of March.

Table 2. Weight of steers, February 2020

	06/02/2020	26/02/2020	2 nd Winter ADG
High	597 kg	556 kg	0.43 kg/day
Medium	611 kg	565 kg	0.49 kg/day
Low	600 kg	564 kg	0.50 kg/day

Yearlings

- The yearlings were weighed on the 3rd February. They averaged 293 kg, gaining 0.63 kg/day.
- The calves were reduced to 1.5 kg concentrate/head/day on the 27th January, and were weaned off meal entirely by the 19th February. They are now being fed *ad lib* silage only.

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Table 3. Weight of yearlings, February 2020

	03/02/2020	2 nd Winter ADG
High	288 kg	0.62 kg/day
Medium	293 kg	0.62 kg/day
Low	298 kg	0.66 kg/day

Spring 2020 calves

- Calves for this year will be reared in Johnstown castle. The first of these 3 week old calves are expected to arrive the first week of March.
- Calves will be fed an electrolyte for their first feed. Their second feed will be of the chosen milk replacer. The feeding programme will be 3L twice daily for 3-4 weeks before changing to once a day feeding. Calves will be fed an 18% CP calf pellet.
- All calves will be vaccinated for IBR and RSP within two days of arrival.

Grassland Management

- The average farm cover sits at 1100 kg DM/ha, with growth rate of 10 kg DM/ha/day.
- Some paddocks on the low and medium stocking rate farmlets have covers of over 1600 kg DM/ha, with one paddock in particular over 1800 kg DM/ha; these will need to be prioritised at turnout. If we do not get out until late March, these may need to be cut and baled as they will be gone too strong for grazing, especially in wetter fields.