

Teagasc Dairy Beef Research Programme

Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford

Update: May 2020

May has seen very low levels of rainfall with a total of 17.7 ml most, of which fell Thursday 21st May. The weather has been unseasonably warm for the past 10 days, which is starting to limit grass growth and impact on the reseed. The yearlings have benefitted greatly from compensatory growth post turnout, and are gaining over 1 kg/day on average since turnout. All the spring born calves are now in, amounting to 311 calves in total (including 100 commercial calves). 130 of these are now weaned.

Animal Performance:

26-month old steers

- The 26-month old steers are performing well at grass and averaged 615 kg on the 18th May.
- The bullocks began concentrate supplementation on the 20th May, and will be built up to 3 kg per day over a 3 week period.

Table 1. 26-month old weight and ADG

	No. animals	Live weight (kg)	ADG third season (kg/day)
High	16	617	0.73
Medium	15	615	0.73
Low	14	612	0.72



Yearlings

- The yearlings are thriving since turnout, and are gaining approximately 1 kg/day. Even though they have been entering heavy covers, especially earlier in the month, they are grazing them out well. They were weighed on the 27th May and averaged 370 kg.

Table 2. Yearling weight and ADG

	Live weight (kg)	ADG second season (kg/day)
High	358	0.96
Medium	382	1.26
Low	369	0.98

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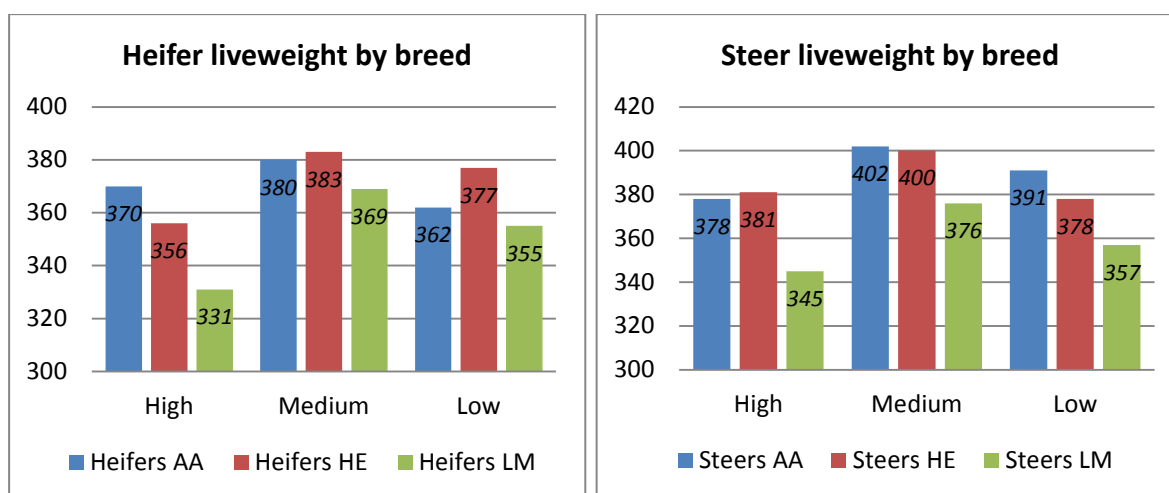


Fig 1 & 2: Yearling heifer and steer live weight by breed

Spring 2020 calves

- By the end of May, a total of 311 calves had arrived to the farm, 100 of which are FR and AA commercial calves (42 calves are from the Johnstown Castle dairy farm – a mix of AA and FR).
- The 269 purchased calves were, on average, 36 days of age at arrival (average birth date is 02/03/2020), and weighed 64.5 kg. 27 calves were purchased weaned.
- 132 calves are weaned in total.
- The calves were given a preventative coccidiosis dose on the 26th May (Chanox).
- In total, over the course of the 3 months, 5 calves out of the 269 purchased beef calves have died; 3 from pneumonia, 1 from a twisted gut and 1 from blackleg.

Grassland Management

- On the 21st May, the average farm cover was 925 kg DM/ha
- The first cut pit silage was cut on the 11th May; 15 paddocks that were closed for silage were cut, along with one paddock that had gone too strong on the medium farmlet. The average grass DM yield was 7259 kg DM/ha.
- The same paddocks are now closed for second cut silage, with the aim to harvest early July.

Table 3. Farm cover, 21st May 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	900	44	74	9.39	6.76	66.4	7.07	12
Med	701	41	69	10.00	10.00	65.4	6.54	10
Low	1224	63	50	11.32	11.32	64.4	5.69	20

- Cattle were grazing heavy covers early May, but were grazing covers between 1500-2000 kg DM/ha later in the month.

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- The average pre-grazing yield for the month of May was 2500 kg DM/ha, with post grazing heights of 4.5 cm.
- The reseed has been sown five weeks and the performance is variable; the paddocks with heavier soils have germinated and seedling growth is far more advanced (see images below). Paddocks with the lighter soils are on a high/bank that is more exposed. The seeds have not 'struck' as well due to the dry conditions. The rain that did fall was quickly dried away due to the blustery drying conditions that followed.



Comparing reseeds on a light (right) and heavier (left) soil. All images were taken the same day (27th May). The paddock on the left has PRG only; the right paddock has PRG + Clover.



PRG + Clover reseeds, the heavier soil type has greater germination and seedling growth (right)



PRG + Clover + herb reseeds in two paddocks, the heavier paddock has advanced further

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