

## The 60:40 Autumn Grassland Management Plan

Farmer name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Area available for grazing: \_\_\_\_\_ hectares

Date on which last round starts: \_\_\_\_\_

**Table 1: Area available for grazing each day this autumn**

	60%	40%
Date	Date 60% is grazed	Date cows are full-time housed
Number of days	From start to 60% date (a)	From 60% date to housing date (b)
Hectares to be grazed	(c)	(d)
	(0.6 X total area)	(0.4 X total area)
Hectares per day	(c ÷ a)	(d ÷ b)

**Table 2: Autumn grazing planner showing weekly targets (from Table 1)**

Week Beginning	Grazing area		Actual area grazed per week
	per day	per week	
<b>Total</b>		Ha	Ha

**If you want to make best use of grass as a feed for your dairy cows, you need to walk your grazing area on a weekly basis.**

#### **Autumn grazing - objectives**

- Keep grass in the milking cows' diet for as long as possible this autumn.
- Allocate a portion of the farm for grazing each day.
- Start closing paddocks from the 10<sup>th</sup> October onwards (1-2 weeks earlier in wet areas).
- Aim to have 60% farm closed by the end of the first week of November (1-2 weeks earlier in wet areas).
- Leave the grazing platform with an "adequate grass cover" when the cows are housed.

**Teagasc Message:** The key to providing grass for your milking herd next spring is to graze 60% of your grazing platform by end of the first week of November. The paddocks grazed by this date will have an opportunity to grow grass before growth rates decline in November.

#### **Autumn grazing - guidelines**

- Graze paddocks to 3.5-4 cm to encourage winter tillering of the grass plant.
- Do not re-graze fields that have been closed.
- Feed supplements if there is insufficient grass in the daily allocation.
- Skip heavier paddocks – and graze paddocks with ideal covers - to meet 60% target if necessary.
- Use wet weather grazing techniques if ground conditions deteriorate.

**Teagasc Message:** During the last rotation, you must focus on grazing residuals if you want to have top quality swards for your milking herd next spring.

#### **Preparing for autumn grazing**

- Rotation length should increase from 25 days in mid-August to 35 days by mid-September and 45 days by the start of the last rotation.
- Grass covers should increase to a peak of 450 kgDM/cow or 1,150 kgDM/Ha in mid- to late-September.
- Do not build up too much grass as heavy covers are difficult to graze under wet conditions and will delay the achievement of the 60% target.
- Assess grass covers in early September. Blanket spread the entire farm with 30 /Ha N before September 15<sup>th</sup> where possible.

#### **Calculations**

- Calculate Stocking Rate: Divide the number of cows by the area available for grazing (hectares).

For example, 60 cows ÷ 24 hectares = 2.5 cows/ha

- Calculate Cover per Cow: Divide average farm cover by stocking rate.

For example, 1,130 kgDM/Ha ÷ 2.5 cows/ha = 450 kgDM/cow

- Calculate Allocation per Cow: Divide grass available on paddock by number of cows.

For example, a 2.5 hectare paddock with a cover of 1,500 kgDM/Ha has a total cover of 2.5 x 1,500 = 3,000 kgDM. If there are 60 cows grazing this paddock, then there is an allocation of 3,000 ÷ 60 = 50 kgDM/cow (three days full-time grazing at this time of the year).

#### **On/ Off Grazing**

- If cows remain in a paddock during periods of high rainfall, treading or poaching damage will occur.
- Research has shown that on/ off grazing can result in 'normal' cow intakes and performance while minimising the risk of poaching damage.