



LevyinAction 2015

Recommended Spring Grazing Management and Herd Nutrition

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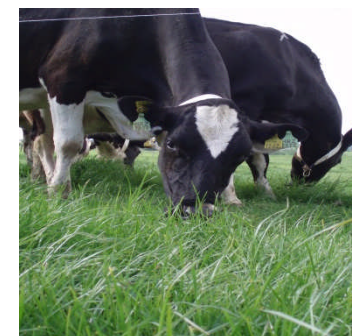
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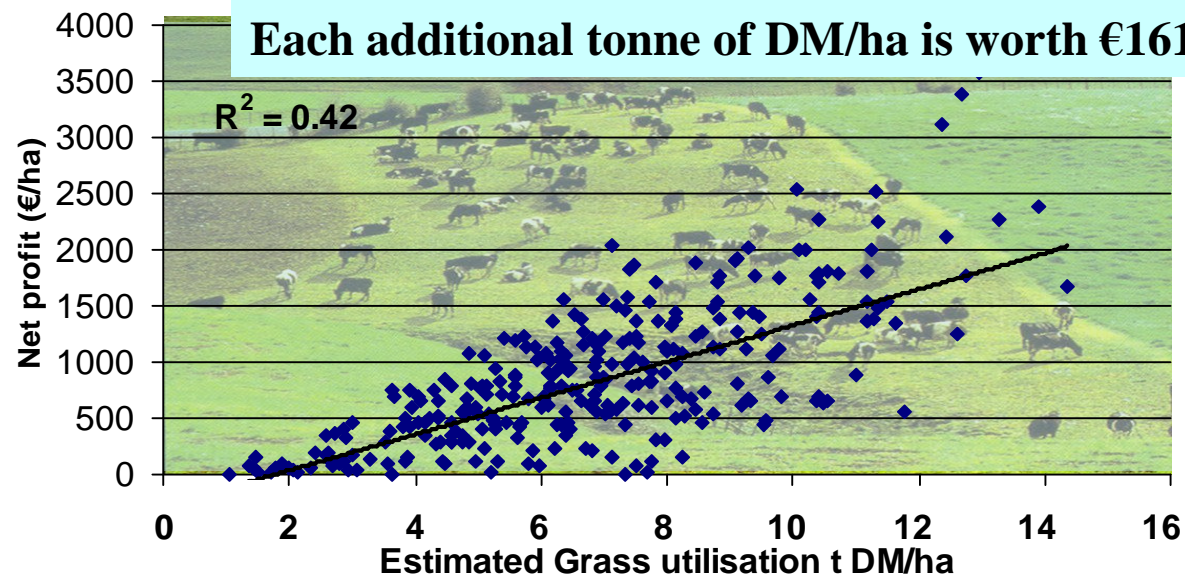


AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority

Stocking rate and Grass Utilisation

- Profitability of Irish dairying is closely linked to grass utilisation (tons DM/ha)
 - Increasing SR only profitable when grass utilisation (tonnes DM/ha) increases



- Optimum Stocking rate for Dairy Farms in 2015

t supplement DM/cow	<i>Pasture grown, t</i>			
	10	12	14	16
0.00	1.5	2.0	2.3	2.6
0.25	1.7	2.1	2.4	2.8
0.50	1.8	2.2	2.5	3.0
0.75	1.9	2.3	2.7	3.1

Spring Grazing Objectives & Guidelines

Why?

Get calved cows out to grass as early as possible

- Increased animal performance - high quality diet with minimal supplements
- Recondition swards for the year ahead – stimulate growth and improve quality
- Maximise spring grass utilisation & minimise sward decay
- Reduce workload on the farm

Each extra day at grass = €2.70/cow/day

How?

- Maintain target Average Farm Cover (AFC) each week during Spring
- Allocate spring grass based on Spring Rotation Plan (SRP)
- Achieve target post-grazing height of 3.5cm
 - maximise utilisation & recondition spring swards
 - enable plants to capture sunlight energy
- Steadily increase total feed allowance from calving into breeding
 - Maximise milk solids production and fertility performance & minimise BCS loss

Spring Grazing Principles

Ryegrass supports 3 actively growing leaves

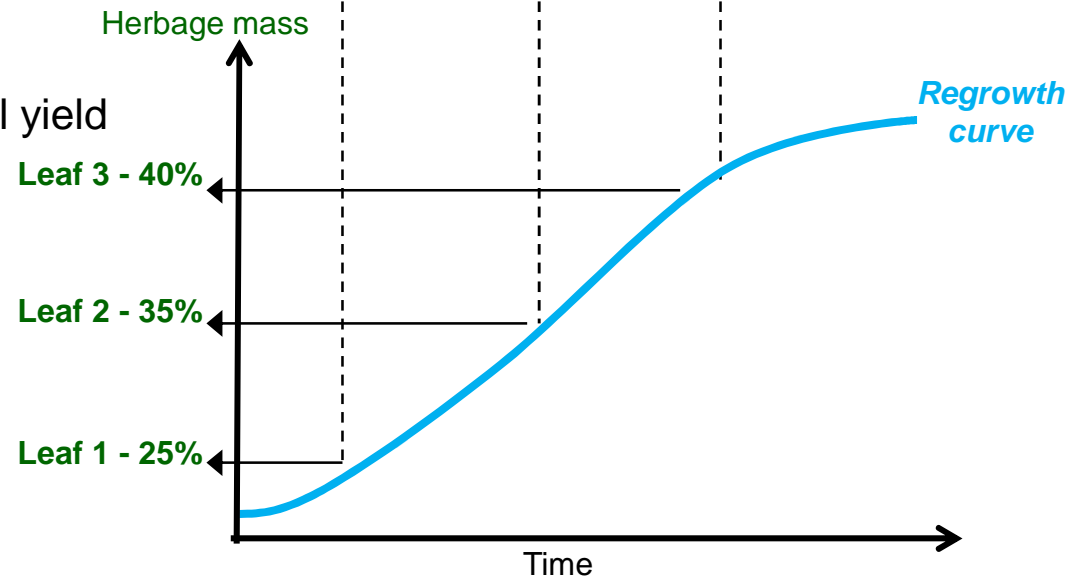
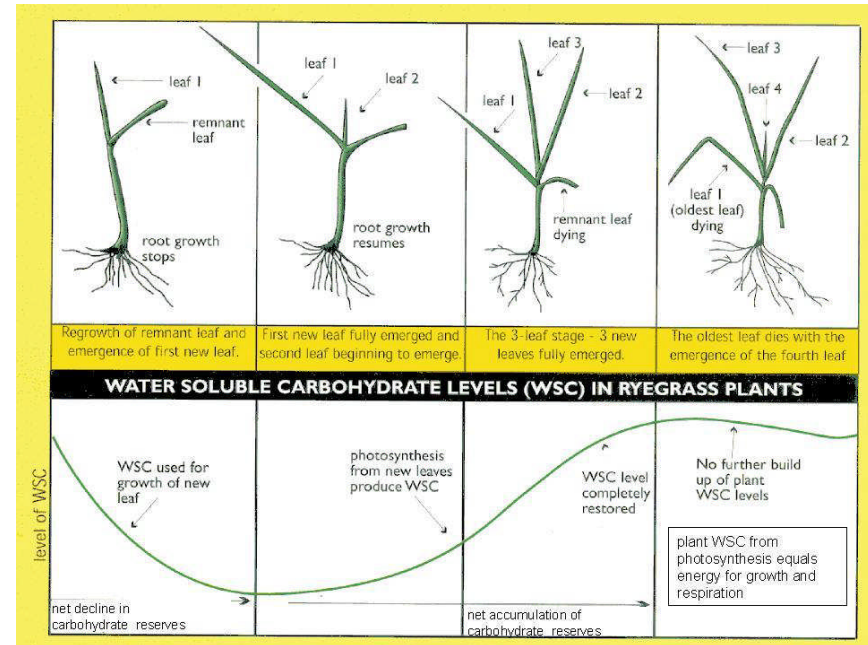
- maximum average growth rate
- high in sugar and nutritionally balanced

To achieve 2.5 - 3 leaves

- Slow 1st rotation (100 days)
- Rapid 2nd & subsequent rotations (21 days)

High Autumn Covers (>1,200 kg DM/ha) should be grazed before Mid-march

Approximately 25, 35 and 40% of total final yield comes from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd leaf



Early Grazing Effects on Sward Characteristics

Early grazed sward



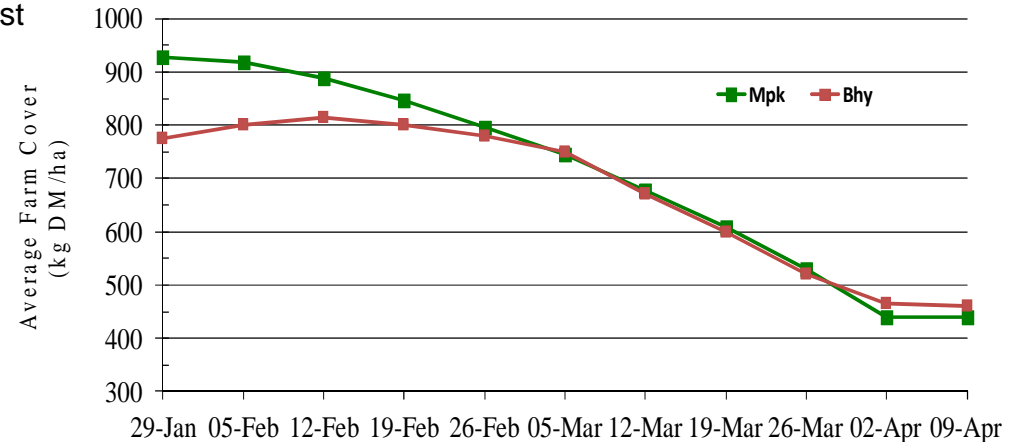
Late grazed sward



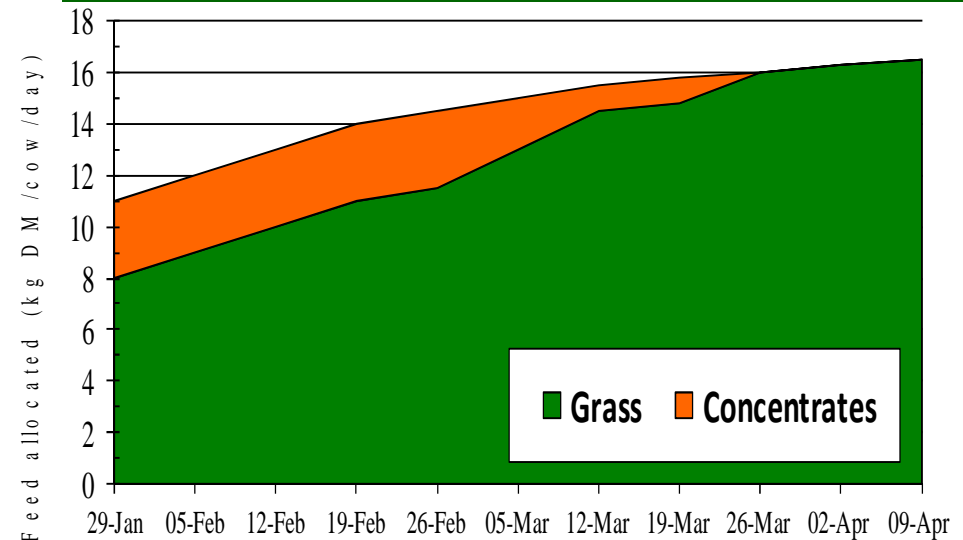
Target Feed Budget & Allowance

- The ideal average farm cover (AFC) of 800 - 900 kg DM/ha on February 1st
- High quality predominantly grass diet from calving
- Extend the 1st rotation from February 1st to early April with minimal supplements
- Feed allowances increasing by 0.75kg DM/cow/wk from calving to breeding

March Grass Growth increased by 3kg DM/day for every 100kg DM/ha increase in AFC



Spring Grass Allowance increased by 1 kg DM/cow/day for every 100kg DM/ha increase in AFC



Using the Spring Rotation Plan (SRP)

Example SRP for a 40 ha dairy farm with 100 dairy cows

Week	Rotation (days)	Daily area (ha/day)	Total area grazed by week end (%)
1 st to 7 th Feb	100	0.4	7
15 th to 21 st Feb	82	0.49	23
22 nd to 28 th Feb	73	0.55	33
8 th to 14 th Mar	56	0.72	56
22 nd to 28 th Mar	38	1.06	90
29 th Mar to 4 th Apr	29	1.38	114

For the plan to be successful

- Stick to the planned area
- Post-grazing residual 3.5cm
- Use a strip wire on a 12-hour basis.
- Grazing area should be back fenced
- On/Off grazing is essential in wet weather.



Fertiliser Recommendations: February/ March

- Spring Nitrogen (N) application is essential to boost growth on all paddocks

Average Grass Growth Response of 10 kg DM per 1 kg N applied per ha in Spring

Efficiency of slurry utilisation increased (x6) during February & March

High risk of N loss to groundwater (x25) during February & March

- Immediately after the closed period for fertilizer and slurry application
 - Apply 2,500 gals. slurry/ac. to 30% of paddocks (<650 kg DM/ha herbage mass)
 - Apply 23 units urea/ ac. to remainder (Urea= 30% cheaper than alternatives/kg N)
- In early March
 - Apply 2,500 gals. slurry/ac. to 30% of paddocks
 - Apply 40 units urea/ ac. to remainder
- 70 units N applied by April 1st
- Pay close attention to weather forecasts to avoid heavy rain and waterlogged soils within 48 hours of nutrient application to minimise losses and maximise benefits.

Summary

- Walk the farm and establish grass supply
- Hit 30% area grazed in February to build grass for Rotation 2
- Increase feed allowance by 0.75 kg DM/cow/wk from calving to breeding
- High Autumn Covers (>1,200 kg DM/ha) should be grazed before Mid-march
- Avoid poaching and protect regrowth
- 70 units N applied by April 1st