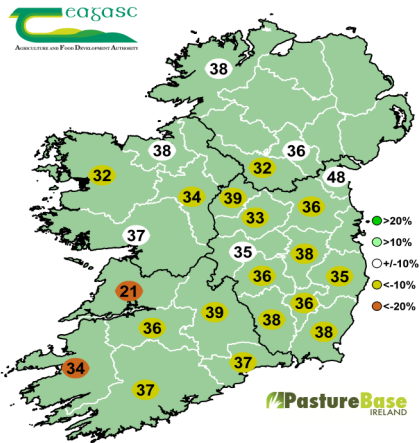


13th October 2020



AFC	Stocking Rate	Cover/LU	Growth	Demand	Pregrazing Yield
838 kg DM/ha	2.9 LU/ha	286 kg DM/LU	35 kg DM/ha	40 kg DM/ha	1810 kg DM/ha

Grass growth measurement
Today's grass growth (kg DM/ha/day)



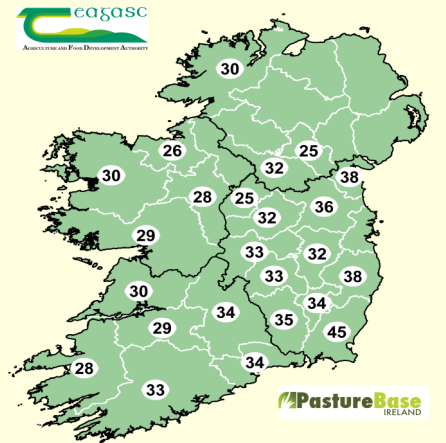
On the left: counties map showing **current** grass growth rates over the last week.

On the right: counties map showing **predicted** grass growth over the next 7 days from farms involved in Elodie Ruelle's MoSt grass growth model (55 farms).

Predicted Growth Rate:

- Ballyhaise 30 kg DM/ha
- South Wexford 37 kg DM/ha
- Athenry 28 kg DM/ha
- Clonakilty 33 kg DM/ha

Grass growth predictions
Next week (kg DM/ha/day)



Average Farm Cover Drops 100 Kg DM/ha In The Past Week

- The dramatic drop in AFC suggests farmers are not holding rotation and closing up the farm too quick. Growth is now less than demand. Remember every day at grass in autumn is worth €1.80/LU per day as livestock are feeding themselves, spread their own manure and performing better.
- Consult your autumn rotation plan on PastureBase. If ahead of target, remove less priority stock to increase grazing area or increase supplementation. If behind and heavy covers still to graze, skip to lighter covers to get area closed and stay on target.
- Heavier farms should aim to have 50-60% of the farm closed this week to have 80-90% of the farm closed by 1st November. Are you on target?
- Heavy farms should be grazing and closing their driest paddocks, closer to the yard, with good access, this week to have 800-1000 kg DM/Ha covers in February for the start of calving
- Drier farms should have 20-30% of the farm closed this week to be on target to have 60-70% closed by 1st Nov and should be closing drier paddocks further from the yard that will be grazed in early March.
- Update your Feed Budget on PastureBase to stay on track and continue to walk the farm this week to monitor farm cover (Do not let it drop below 500 KgDM/Ha).

Grass DM

13.1 %

Moorepark @ 9am

(1600 kg/DM/Ha cover, damp)

How should I graze during October?

Spring grazing rules apply!

- 12 hour strip wire and backfence
- Protect regrowth's
- Continue to hit 4cm residuals
- Be flexible– On/Off grazing for 3 hours in sustained wet weather
- Spur roadways to access difficult paddocks



Picking Your Paddocks to Graze



..For The Autumn Rotation Plan

- 30% by 20th Oct**
(further from yard, ok access, dry)
- Another 30% by 1st Nov**
(drier, closer to yard, multiple access, sheltered, recently reseeded, quickest growing)
- Final 40% During Nov**
(awkward paddocks, furthest from yard, poorer grazing infrastructure, older pastures, slower growing, silage ground)

..For The Spring Rotation Plan

- 30% in February**
(drier, closer to yard, multiple access, sheltered, Covers of 800-1200kgDM/Ha, recently reseeded, quickest growing)
- 30% from 1st Mar to St. Patrick's day** (Heavier Covers > 1200 KgDM/Ha, further from yard, ok access, dry)
- Last 40% by 5th April**
(awkward paddocks, furthest from yard, poorer grazing infrastructure, older pastures, slower growing, silage ground)

*Heavy Farm targets for autumn should be 7 – 10 days earlier and for the spring 7-10 days later.

Autumn Checklist– Tick when completed for your farm

- Slurry & FYM applied
- Lime applied
- K fertiliser applied
- Grass Budget
- Autumn Rotation Planner
- Grazing Plan

13th October 2020

120 Days Rest Is Crucial For Grass At Lambing

Sheep farmer, John O'Connell from Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim **has begun his autumn closing rotation in anticipation for a high demand for spring grass at lambing.** John is the 2019 Sheep Grassland Farmer Of The Year. He farms 34Ha in total, with the 17Ha home block containing most of the sheep and contract heifer rearing on the out block.

Using the **sheep autumn closing planner**, John usually begins closing his farm in mid-Oct on a 60 day rotation meaning the whole farm closed by mid-Dec. In John's plan there are 17Ha to be grazed in about 60 days or 2 Ha per week. This equates to about 1.5 paddocks per week. **A key target to have grass at lambing is to have 40-50% of the farm closed by mid-Nov.** Paddocks are grazed out to 4cm. This avoids buying expensive concentrate and reduces the workload at lambing.

John extended his grazing rotation from 21 days in mid-Aug to 35 days in mid-Sept. This means he has enough grass on the farm now, to keep his ewes grazing well into Dec. This is important to reduce winter costs and for ewe nutrition after mating.

John will not regraze any paddocks after they are closed as *"lambing is so compact than I'll need a lot of grass in a short space of time"*. No grass at lambing entails buying expensive concentrate as ewes' intakes double after they have lambed.

"I start closing paddocks closest to the yard first, and work my way out to the furthest paddocks". Having grass on paddocks closest to the yard with shelter next spring is key to making life easier (see table below). As lambs get older and groups get bigger they can then move further away from the yard, so these paddocks can be closed later in the autumn.

John says the key is to give each paddock **"the 120 days rest to get that ground growing grass all winter to have grass next spring"**. To find out more watch John's video on autumn closing at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b11F827hHvA>

John's Current Grass Performance	
AFC (Kg DM/Ha)	760
Cover/LU (Kg DM/LU)	360
Growth (Kg DM/Ha/Day)	39
Demand (Kg DM/Ha/Day)	27
Stocking Rate (LU/Ha)	2.1
Days Ahead	28
PGY (Kg DM/Ha)	1500 (9cm)



John O'Connell, Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim is the current Sheep GFOY Winner

Understanding The Sheep Autumn Closing Plan

Area To Close (%)	When To Close By	Which Paddocks	120 Day Rest Period (DO NOT RE-GRAZE)	Needed For Grazing In	Pregrazing Yield In Spring
20	Late Oct	Closer To The Yard		Early Mar	1200-1400 Kg DM/Ha (8-9cm)
40	Mid Nov			Late Mar	
60	Late Nov	Further From The Yard		Early Apr	
80	Mid Dec			Mid Apr	

Trends Emerging From Ballyhaise Extended Grazing Trial

2020 is the final year of a four-year grazing trial in Ballyhaise looking at extended grazing on heavy soils in Northern regions. Within this trial we set up two grazing season lengths (average 205 day: Mid-Mar to Mid-Oct and extended 270 days: Mid-Feb to Mid-Nov) with 2 stocking rates (2.5 LU/Ha & 2.9 LU/Ha). The objective was to identify the impact of extended grazing on the pasture, the cow and the overall economics of milk production. Donal Patton has summarised the trends emerging from the trial:

- Grass production is similar across all treatments (14.5 T DM /Ha), however extending grazing increases the proportion of grass utilised as grazed grass. The 2.5 LU/Ha extended grazing system is 90% self-sufficient for silage
- Detailed measurements of poaching and soil compaction were taken in two years of the trial but have not been analysed yet. However extended grazing had no impact on grass production for better or worse
- Extended treatments needed 1.2 – 1.4 T DM silage per cow (30 – 40% high quality silage 75DMD+). The average treatment needed additional 0.6 to 0.8 T DM silage per cow of high quality silage
- 150 kg extra concentrate had to be fed to the average groups to maintain performance, with higher crude protein % in early spring to account for lack of grazed grass in the diet.
- Extended treatments produced 20kg of milk solids per cow more than average treatments in 2019, however in 2017 and 2018 the difference in production was smaller at 10kg milk solids per cow
- Preliminary results indicate that each extra day at grass is worth €2.30 per cow
- Building grass in August and holding sufficient cover over winter coupled with good grazing infrastructure are the main drivers of success. These strategies are not widely practiced in the region.