Teagasc
Advisory
Newsletter

BEEF

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Lice management of housed cattle

By now all categories of stock will have been housed due to persistent rain, while fluke and worm treatments will have been given. Lice treatment is usually carried out at housing but repeat treatment is necessary in many cases.

Repeat lice treatment may be necessary.

Lice infestations left untreated have the potential to significantly reduce weight gain in finishing cattle, in what is an expensive time in a finishing animal's life. There are basically two types of products used in the control of lice. You have the:

- pour-on synthetic pyrethroids; and,
- injectable or pour-on avermectins.

Injectable and pour-on products can be used to manage mites and sucking lice, but only pour-on products are effective against biting lice. The pour-on products will disperse throughout the fat layer, which is how they become effective against biting lice, as they do not ingest blood.

For pour-on products, correct administration is key to effective control. If using a pour on to control lice, it is generally best to clip the backs of cattle. It is also important not to under dose.

Lice spread very readily between cattle and the main route of transmission is by direct contact, so all contact animals should be treated at the same time. It is also important to treat any bought-in animals before they are let join any groups of housed cattle that have been already treated. Cattle should be checked two to three weeks after the initial treatment just to make sure they are not showing signs of infestation.

The reason you may have to treat again after two to three weeks is to kill off any lice that have hatched from eggs since your last treatment.

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RESEARCH UPDATE

Growth in focus

MARK MCGEE of Teagasc Grange reports on the optimum growth rate for weanling beef cattle during the winter housing period.

To reduce feed costs and exploit subsequent compensatory ("catch-up") growth at pasture during the following grazing season, a liveweight gain of 0.5-0.6kg/day through the first winter is acceptable for weanling steers and heifers (and suckler bulls). Due to compensatory growth, there is little point in over feeding weanlings during the first winter. However, cattle growing too slowly (<0.5kg/day) during winter are unable to compensate sufficiently at pasture and will not reach target weights later in life. Dry matter digestibility (DMD) is the primary factor influencing the nutritive value of forage and consequently, the performance of forage-fed cattle. The target growth rate for weanlings during the first winter can be achieved on grass silage supplemented with concentrates, as outlined in **Table 1**. Low DMD silage means higher levels of concentrate supplementation have to be used to achieve the same growth rates. This highlights the importance of having good silage quality for growing cattle.

Energy is the most important nutrient required by growing cattle. Recent studies at Teagasc Grange have shown that for growing cattle, soya hulls and citrus pulp can replace rolled barley (balanced for protein) in concentrate rations offered at relatively low levels (ca. 2kg/day), as a supplement to high-digestibility grass silage, without negatively affecting performance. Grange research has shown that weanling steers and heifers generally do not require protein supplementation when fed barley-based concentrates and high DMD grass silage, but for suckler bull weanlings, recent research showed a significant, but small, response to protein supplementation. However, weanlings are likely to respond to supplementary protein in barley-based concentrates when grass silage has moderate to low DMD and/or low protein content.

Table 1: Concentrate supplementation necessary for weanlings to grow at ~0.5kg liveweight/day when offered grass silage of varying DMD to appetite.

Grass silage DMD (%)	~60	~65	~70	~75
Concentrate supplementation (kg/day)	2.0-3.0	1.5-2.0	1.0-1.5	0-1.0

Low DMD silage means more supplementation is needed to achieve the same growth rates.

Calf weights 2020

Table 2: Calf performance from birth to housing weighing.

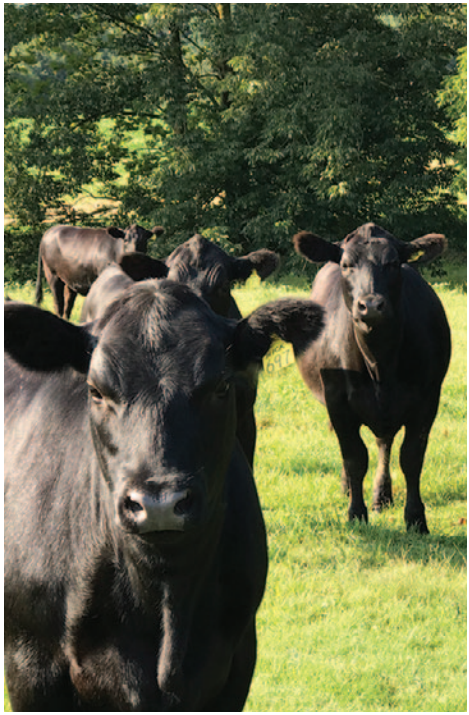
	Date	Average weight (kg)	ADG from birth (kg/day)	ADG since previous weighing (kg/day)	Target weight (kg)	Target ADG (kg/day)
Average DOB	February 16, 2020	40	-	-	-	-
First weighing	August 18, 2020	166	0.69	0.70	168.8	0.7
Second weighing	November 4, 2020	237	0.76	0.91	231.2	0.8

Irvine Allen is a participant in the Teagasc Green Acres Calf-to-Beef Programme and farms near Moate, Co. Westmeath. He runs a Friesian steer system, killing cattle at 24-30 months of age. This year Irvine reared 109 spring-born calves and has been tracking their performance throughout the grazing season through regular weighing. Recently, a housing weighing was completed to quantify how successful the rearing of these calves has been to date and to make better informed decisions on how to manage them over the winter months. **Table 2** summarises the results of the midseason and housing weighing versus the targets set.

Irvine does not have winter housing for all of his cattle, so 59 of these calves are going to be out-wintered on 11 acres of forage crop (Redstart) that was sown for this purpose in late August. The heaviest 59 calves (average weight: 256kg) received a mineral bolus with high levels of iodine, and have started to receive a fresh strip of forage crop each day to make up 50% of their diet, along with high-quality baled silage (73 DMD), fed on a lie-back area to make up the other 50% of the diet.

The lighter 50 calves (average weight: 214kg) have been housed and are receiving 1.5kg of ration along with high-quality silage (75 DMD).

The performance of both groups will continue to be monitored through regular weighings, and an average daily gain (ADG) over the winter period of 0.6kg is targeted.



Irvine runs a Friesian steer system in Co. Westmeath.

The Beef Edge podcast

Have you listened to *The Beef Edge* podcast? Podcasts are free audio shows that anyone with an iPhone, Android phone or computer can listen to. You can listen anywhere and anytime. Presented by Catherine Egan, the podcasts cover the latest news, information and advice to improve your beef farm performance.
The Beef Edge podcast is celebrating its first anniversary. Over 22,000 farmers have tuned in to hear timely technical information and the latest research and advice from Teagasc and industry stakeholders. Tune in at **www.teagasc.ie/thebeefedge**.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Prevent fire deaths in the home

Deaths due to fire are a source of tragedy in farmhouses. An Irish Health Research Board (HRB) study has shown that farmers and agricultural workers account for 20% of fire deaths nationally. This is proportionately higher than other sectors. Almost all fires occurred in dwelling houses. Contributory factors included smoking, high alcohol consumption, plugged-in or faulty electrical devices, open fires, and frying or chip pans. A small number of fires were linked to candles burning. Give preventing fires in your home and on your farm attention over the coming months.

Take fire-safety action.

This year, due to Covid-19, people are likely to be home more often, so the risk is increased. Fire safety advice is available at: **www.firesafetyweek.ie**.

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