

BEEF

January 2021

15 steps to prepare for  
calving seasonEdited by  
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Most suckler farmers will begin their calving season in late January/early February. It can be a time of stress on both the animal and the farmer. However, with some preparation we can reduce this stress.

1. Use your scan results to know what dates your cows are calving.
2. Identify any cows carrying twins, as they may calve earlier.
3. Have fit but not fat cows/heifers. If their condition needs to be adjusted up or down, ensure that this is done six weeks before calving. Do not starve cows in the final few weeks as they will not have the strength to calve and won't have adequate colostrum once calved.
4. Ensure that you are feeding a recommended pre-calving mineral high in magnesium, phosphorous, selenium and iodine for at least six weeks pre calving.
5. Ensure that all your cows' vaccinations are up to date and given within the correct time period so that adequate antibodies are in the colostrum.
6. Control liver fluke in cows where necessary.
7. Check your calving sheds and equipment, i.e., calving cameras are working, you have a working calving jack, the calving pen and gates are working and greased, etc.
8. Clean and lime slats – this will help to keep cows clean. Dirty cows will lead to scours and joint ill in calves.
9. Lime and disinfect calving pens and ensure that they are well bedded with clean, dry straw.
10. Clean and disinfect pens between each use.

11. Write a shopping list and get all your supplies well in advance of the start of calving, e.g., gloves, spare calving ropes, stomach tube, Milton, lubricant, iodine, etc. For a sample list, log on to [www.teagasc.ie/beef](http://www.teagasc.ie/beef).
12. Have fresh frozen colostrum on farm. If possible, take some colostrum from the first couple of calved cows and freeze it. This colostrum will have antibodies from earlier vaccinations and other diseases present on your farm.
13. Be careful of getting colostrum from other farms as it may not contain the same antibodies for the diseases on your farm and it may also carry Johne's disease.
14. Be sure to feed enough colostrum to calves, at least three litres in the first two hours of birth if possible, but definitely

within the first six hours of birth, to ensure good immunity levels in your calves.

15. Think safety. Ensure that pens and gates are working properly, have good lighting in your sheds, always have an escape route, carry your phone in an accessible pocket, and know your Eircode.

For more information, check out the Teagasc/Animal Health Ireland CalfCare events, which are going virtual for 2021. From Monday, January 18, to Thursday, January 21, we will run webinars, videos, podcasts and supporting newspaper articles. For details, log on to the Teagasc and AHI websites and social media accounts.



## Has your winter housing dose worked?

Every year we talk endlessly about what parasites need to be controlled at housing, the cost to the system of not controlling them, and the best mix of products to use.

We also discuss the prevalence of anthelmintic resistance in fluke and worms in Ireland.

However, how often do we check that our chosen products have worked?

Now is the perfect time to check and these are a few simple ways to do it.

1. If slaughtering animals, use the AHI Beef HealthCheck reports sent out by participating abattoirs or check them online on [www.icbf.com](http://www.icbf.com). This will tell you the status of the liver and lungs at the time of slaughter.
2. If the abattoir is not participating in the programme, see if you can talk to the vet on the line.



*Carry out faecal egg sampling on your farm.*

3. Do a faecal egg sample test. On most farms, animals will be housed for more than 12 weeks; if your dosing programme worked, there will be no adult worms present to lay eggs and therefore your sample will come back negative.

## BDGP extended for one year – closing date January 15

At the time of printing, the closing date for the Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) extension is 5.00pm on January 15. This extension is open to those BDGP participants who have already met the requirements for the full six-year duration of the BDGP (2015-2020). Your reference number will remain the same as in the previous scheme, the rate of payment is the same and the tasks are all the same.

You must:

- record your calving detail;
- genotype;
- complete surveys;
- complete a carbon navigator;
- ensure that 50% of the reference number of heifers/eligible suckler cows are 4/5 star on the replacement index on October 31, 2021; and,
- if using a stock bull, ensure that at least one bull on the holding on June 30, 2021, is a genotyped 4 or 5 star bull on either the replacement or terminal index.

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## Teagasc re-launches the Let's Talk Cattle and Sheep webinar series

Teagasc will re-launch the Let's Talk Cattle and Sheep webinar series in January 2021. This webinar will feature presentations and interviews with various specialists on up-to-date topics relating to beef production. The webinars will run monthly, beginning at 8.00pm on Thursday, January 14. The first webinar will feature a presentation by MSD Animal Health on the health management of purchased dairy-bred beef

calves after they arrive on farm. Alan Dillon, Teagasc Beef Specialist, will be chairing the webinars and there will be an opportunity for viewers to ask questions live during the presentations. These webinars should prove to be informative and interactive, and will be essential viewing for beef farmers in 2021. Keep an eye on the Teagasc website for links to watch the webinars live in January.

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## 50th episode of the Beef Edge podcast



Congratulations to Catherine Egan and the Beef Edge podcast team on a great year's work. Since launching on December 4, 2019, and as of January 6, 2021, there have been 50 episodes and over 27,000 listens. With guest interviews, tips and advice, it will continue to bring you all the latest information and advice to help improve your beef farming in 2021.

For more information, log on to [Teagasc.ie/thebeefedge](https://www.teagasc.ie/thebeefedge).

## RESEARCH UPDATE

### High prevalence of liver fluke in 2020



Liver fluke disease has a high prevalence in Irish cattle, and appropriate treatment is essential, says DR ORLA KEANE of Teagasc Grange.

Liver fluke disease, caused by the flatworm parasite *Fasciola hepatica*, causes significant losses to the livestock industry in Ireland. Liver fluke has a seasonal, indirect life cycle with both animal and snail hosts. Under appropriate conditions, eggs passed out onto pasture in spring by infected animals hatch into miracidia, which infect mud snails where they multiply. After about six weeks, cercariae are released from the snail host and encyst on the grass as metacercariae. When eaten by grazing cattle the newly excysted juvenile fluke burrow through the gut wall and migrate to the liver, a process that takes about two weeks. Over the following eight to ten weeks, the immature fluke migrate through the liver where they can cause extensive damage, ending up in the gallbladder, where the mature fluke lay eggs that are passed out with the dung.

Infection with liver fluke has a high prevalence in Irish cattle, with well-recognised effects of weather and ground conditions on exposure to the parasite. The warm, wet summer of 2020 provided ideal conditions for the parasite and the 2020 fluke forecast produced by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has indicated a widespread prevalence of the disease. Where possible, use farm history combined with factory liver report information, such as from the Animal Health Ireland Beef HealthCheck Programme, to determine liver fluke exposure. Housing represents a good opportunity to control fluke. However, there are different products on the market, which kill fluke of different ages. It is important to target the treatment to the appropriate stage of the parasite. Discuss your strategy with your vet or adviser.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

### Health is wealth

Put health at the top of your agenda for 2021. A major Irish study completed in 2020 found that 74% of farmers have four or more risk factors for cardiovascular disease (CVD), which increase the chance of having a stroke or heart attack threefold compared to those with fewer risk factors. January is the month for new year resolutions, but the challenge is to implement them over time! Select achievable goals and check in with yourself at regular



*Improve your health by selecting achievable goals.*

intervals to see how you are doing. Better still, work with a friend or family member to monitor goal achievement.

The booklet 'Fit for Farming' on the web gives health goal pointers. Small changes over time can have a major impact on one's health. The Irish health study is

available at:

<https://www.teagasc.ie/publications/2020/farmers-have-hearts-cardiovascular-health-programme.php>

