

Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 11th September 2020

Grassland Management

It is vital to continue to walk your farm in the autumn and record the grass figures on PastureBase. Why you might ask? The key reasons are as follows:

1. To monitor average farm cover (AFC) of grass and meet the autumn grazing targets.
2. To record autumn growth rates for your farm for future use.
3. To avoid grazing for too long and using grass that you need in the spring.
4. To record accurately record the tonnes of grass grown for the year.

The number of farm walks needed to achieve this is set out below by month. Keep in mind that walking the farm is also good for your personal health while also being of huge benefit to the business of farming.

- September 4 walks (Weekly to build grass)
- October 2 walks (Early and Late October)
- November 2 Walks (Early November and at housing)
- December 1 Walk (1st of December Closing Cover)

Sward Quality

On-going research on grass clover swards in Clonakilty Agricultural College has highlighted the value of clover to the feed quality of swards. This is particularly evident in the current difficult weather conditions over the past number of weeks. While the dry matter of grass and grass clover swards is low, the clover swards are showing high value in terms of digestibility and energy value when compared to grass only swards. Grass samples were taken from the same paddock which was reseeded in April of this year. They were split into four different treatments. Dry matter was low due to heavy rainfall, and it was lower still for the two grass -clover treatments. However, the energy (DMD & UFL) and protein (CP) content of both grass-clover swards were higher when compared with the grass-only swards.

Grassland Farmer Of The Year 2020—Deadline Extended

The deadline for entries for the 2020 Grassland Farmer Of The Year competition has been extended until Friday 11th Sept. This is to accommodate the later launch of the competition which coincided with peak holiday season. This gives farmers and advisors another chance to get in entries for the competition. In the videos below, our 4 category winners from the 2019 GFOY go through some of the reasons they entered the competition and what they learned along the way. Click into the videos to hear from the farmers. You can also click on the link attached to see more information on the competition and for the entry form <https://bit.ly/GFOY2020>.

Beef Finisher Scheme

We mentioned this scheme in last week's notes. The reference period for the scheme includes animals slaughtered between the 01/02/20 to 12/06/20 inclusive. Many farmers are realising that they may have more eligible animals than first thought. The scheme is open to dairy and beef farmers. The critical point is that animals sold privately or to a mart and slaughtered in the reference period by the buyer within 30 days of that sale means that the animals are eligible for the original

seller. In other words, Farmer A sold cattle in the mart and they were bought by Farmer B and slaughtered within 30 days within the reference period (01/02/20 to 12/06/20). The animals are eligible for Farmer A in this scheme.

Autumn Crops

There is always a temptation to plant winter crops early if weather allows but sowing early can often result more pest and disease problems. Dealing with this increases costs and reduces yield and impacts directly on profitability. Mid-September to early October generally results in good seed beds and better germination resulting in higher establishment rates. However, there is an increased threat from take-all, foliar diseases, lodging, grass weeds and aphids (BYDV). Targeting early October in this part of the country, reduces the risk of BYDV over September planting.

Drafting Lambs

Where lambs are finished on farm, look carefully through the lambs to see how close they are to finish. This will influence your autumn grassland decisions. Wet conditions have had an impact on lamb performance and will delay finishing. It is important to maintain lamb performance at this time of year. Prioritise the lambs for the best quality grass.

Fertiliser

This closing date for chemical fertiliser applications is the 15th of September. Ensure that you check your fertiliser plan or derogation plan before applying to ensure that you remain within the limits allowed. Remember, there is a build-up of background nitrogen in the soil that only needs to be topped up to at this time of year to sustain growth into the autumn and early winter. Over applying nitrogen above the recommended limits is wasting money and causes losses to the environment. Many farmers are forward buying fertiliser for 2020/1 at the moment. While CAN is available remember that it is not a suitable product for early spring as it results in increased Nitrogen loss to the environment when soil temperatures and growth is low. If you are forward buying, consider buying Protected Urea to save you money in the spring as it is a more stable product and also improve water quality in your locality by reducing nitrogen losses.