

Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 16th October 2020

Closing the Farm with Spring in Mind

October is a critical month in the yearly grassland calendar. The paddocks closed from now on will be the first ones to be grazed in the spring. All farms should have plan in place to graze paddocks out cleanly where possible and close for the spring time. The latest date to start closing is the 15th of October but higher stocked farms and farms with heavy soil generally start closing paddocks 7-10 days earlier than your typical farm. Weather and ground conditions also play a part. Grazing too late in the season can reduce closing cover and increase feed costs in the spring time.

The big mistake that many farmers make if weather and ground conditions are good in late autumn is to keep grazing. If the paddock is closed, do not go back into it. Leave it for the spring!

The bank of grass that is built up on the farm since mid-August is what you are grazing from now on. It is important to keep grass in the diet for as long as possible in the autumn to maximise cow performance. Every day at grass is worth €1.80 per livestock unit per day in autumn. Use the 60/40 Autumn Rotation Planner as a tool to plan your October grazing. It is important to put a grazing plan together for the paddocks you want grass on next spring; this is worth €2.70 per livestock unit per day next spring. Aim to graze 60% of your farm by 1st November (70 - 80% if highly stocked or heavy land).

Picking your paddocks to graze next Spring;

- Close first 30% - 35% by late October – Grazing next March, Cover of ≥ 1400 kg/DM/ha as you will have an increased demand
- Close second 30% - 35% by November 1st – Grazing next February, Cover of 800-1200 kg/DM/ha so good access from farm is key.
- Close third 30% - 40% by late November – Graze later, key for slurry next Spring

It is vital to have spring grass right as the cow's appetites rise and their energy demand rises post calving. Grazed grass in the spring has a DMD in the mid-eighties, whereas your silage may range from 65-75 DMD. Therefore, grazed grass supplies the cow with a lot more energy. The heaviest covers, wetter paddocks, and paddocks poorly grazed out in the last rotation should all be grazed in dry conditions only using 12 hour allocations and grazing down to 4cm. Grazing below this figure will have a negative impact on grass growth and will encourage weeds to grow instead. If conditions deteriorate put a back fence and put spur roadways in place to graze out paddocks. Several access points to paddocks should also be put in place to try and minimise the damage done.

Parasite Control in Beef Cattle: Some Helpful Reminders

- Pay particular attention to dose-to-weight calculations to ensure animals receive the correct dose.
- Read the product label and instructions for the chosen products carefully. Talk to your Vet if you are unsure.
- For worms, it is best to use products that are active against both adult and inhibited larvae of the stomach worm, *O. ostertagi*.
- For lice control, it is generally best to use an externally applied product. If high levels of control are required, treat all the animals in a group and make sure they are not in contact with any untreated animals throughout the winter. The same is broadly true for mange control, but injectable products can also be useful for sarcoptic and psoroptic mange.
- If no treatments for ectoparasites (lice, mange) are given at housing, then stock should be checked a couple of months after housing, as it's generally around this time (January/February) that any problems with lice or mange appear.
- Whilst acceptable levels of liver fluke control can be achieved with a housing treatment, if infection levels are high and, particularly if animals have picked up a lot of new infections just before they are housed, then a more stringent approach may be required:

- If the flukicide used at housing is only effective in treating older immature liver flukes and/or adult liver flukes, then, it is worth checking faecal samples approximately 6-8 weeks after housing to see if any liver fluke eggs are present and to re-treat as appropriate.
- An alternative is to delay administration of such products to 6-8 weeks after housing, by which time most of the liver fluke present in the animal will be adult and susceptible to treatment, (or animals can be treated empirically at housing and later without any diagnostics).
- If products containing triclabendazole are used at housing, these should kill early immature and adult liver flukes and therefore a follow-up treatment should not be necessary. However, while not confirmed in cattle, resistance to triclabendazole appears to be quite widespread in sheep in Ireland, therefore it may still be worthwhile checking faecal samples for liver fluke eggs a few weeks after treatment.
- Finally, if dairy cows are to be treated at drying-off or during the dry period, check the latest product literature as several have changed recently and you should ensure that you comply with any label changes to avoid residues in milk in the next lactation.
- Remember to record all treatments in your BORD BIA record book.

