

Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 18th September 2020

SHEEP

Drafting Lambs

Take stock of the remaining lambs on the farm and how close they are to finish; this will influence the autumn grassland management. The wet conditions during August have had an impact on lamb performance, which in turn will delay finishing. It is important to maintain lamb performance at this stage of the year. Continue to allow lambs access to the best pasture, grazing down to approximately 6cm and cleaning out with ewes. Keep drafting lambs regularly; remember lamb kill-out percentages will decline as the season progresses. It is important to handle lambs when drafting to ensure adequate cover. Providing concentrate supplementation at a rate of 0.3-0.5kg per day to a finishing group (i.e., those near drafting weight) will help attain finish and compensate for any reduction in performance.

BEEF

Build grass covers

September is the last month you have to build grass covers and extend your grazing rotation length in order to set your farm up for the last grazing rotation in October and November. If you don't have a reasonable bank of grass saved up by the end of the month, your last rotation could end up being very short and you will have to house all of your stock much sooner than you would like to. September 15 is the last day you can spread nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) fertilisers. The sooner any planned fertiliser applications are spread the better, as growth rates tend to decline as the month progresses. No more topping or surplus silage cutting should take place. Suckler cows being weaned can be restricted to allow covers to build, especially if they are already in good body condition. Stock being finished off grass should be supplemented with meal, which will reduce their demand for grass. Young calves in dairy calf-to-beef systems should be fed meal at grass from now until housing. Where grass supply is getting tight, consider housing some stock to allow other cattle to remain outdoors for an extended period. The target going into October and the last grazing rotation should be to have at least 35 days of grass ahead of stock. If weather conditions allow it, this would mean that some stock will be grazing until November.

FARM SAFETY

Getting Ready for the Winter

From mid September onwards is the ideal time to focus on getting winter ready.

In recent years, storms, flooding, and snow and ice have become more frequent in winter. Now is the time to do winter-ready maintenance around the farm. For example, check for buildings or trees that could collapse. Check your supplies, e.g., anti-slip grit, protective clothing and equipment, torch batteries and first-aid boxes. Make sure to have your emergency contacts up to date and accessible and that your Eircode is displayed in a prominent place. Further information on getting winter ready is available on the health and safety section of the Teagasc website.

COMPETITION TIME!

Grassland Farmer of the Year Competition

The Grassland Farmer of the Year competition will recognise those farmers who are achieving high levels of grass utilisation in a sustainable manner. Irish agriculture faces serious challenges in trying to meet greenhouse gas and ammonia emission targets. Improved nutrient management and the use of clover are now more important than ever. The sustainability of our livestock production must improve. Some farmers have to operate with difficult land and the competition will also recognise this. Awards will also be made to those farmers who demonstrate excellence in specific areas of grassland on their farm.

The competition has an overall prize fund of €30,000. Seven category winners will be selected.

Enterprise awards include:

- dairy;
- sheep; and,
- beef – suckling and non-suckling categories. Other categories include:
- disadvantaged land winner;
- sustainable farming winner; and,
- young farmer (under 30 years).¹

Each category winner will receive €3,500. The overall winner will be selected from the seven category winners and will receive an additional €2,500. There will be additional grassland merit award winners.

Application form

Complete the online application form or download the form from the following link:

www.teagasc.ie/media/website/crops/grassland/grass10/print_2020-A4-DL-FOTY-application-form.pdf

Completed application forms should be returned to:

Grassland Farmer of the Year Competition, c/o Niamh Allen, Teagasc, Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork.

