

## Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021

### Grass Walks

To get the most from grass measuring, you need walk the farm 30-40 times in the year. How often you walk the farm to measure depends on how well grass is growing. During current high growth rates, a farm walk should be completed every 4-5 days or ideally, twice per week.

You should have 15-20 walks completed so far this year if you are serious about managing and getting the most out of your grassland in terms of its proportion of the diet of your stock. Walking frequently enables accurate decision-making and ensures animals graze the best quality grass for animal performance. It also goes a long way to insulating you from running short of feed.

Farmers who applied for a Nitrates Derogation must either complete sufficient grass walks and record them on Pasturebase or equivalent software programme or complete a grass course in 2021. Sufficient grass walks means that you must have completed 10 walks in 2020 and 20 walks in 2021. For 2021, a walk must have been completed in February; two in March; 14 walks between April and October with the final walk in November. Again, this must be recorded on PastureBase or equivalent software. IF you cannot achieve this then you must complete a 5 ½ hour grass course before the end of 2021 to be eligible to remain in Derogation for 2021.

These courses are to encourage farmers to learn to utilise grass better and will make a major contribution to reducing our carbon footprint by reducing dependence on bought in feed.

Grass is growing at its peak at the moment with average growth rates of up to 80 kg DM/ha. At this growth rate, it can get ahead of you so quickly. Currently on many farms, grass quality is a major issue due to the weather conditions and heading out over the past month. Restoring grass quality should be a priority on all farms. Take bales from paddocks with heavier covers, especially those under-grazed (over 4cm) in the last rotation. Keep pre-grazing covers to 1400 Kg DM/ha or less to get a good clean out and cover/ LU at 160-180 Kg DM/LU or 12-14 days ahead; Check rotation length back on your PastureBase data (aim for 15-18 days) and Keep walking the farm every 5 days during high growth.

### REAP

5,000 farmers were successfully accepted into the pilot environmental scheme REAP. These farmers will now have until 31<sup>st</sup> of July to submit a plan via their agricultural advisor. To qualify farmers must have at least 2 hectares of grassland with less than 30% ryegrass or choose to plant 2 hectares of a multi-species ley containing certified red clovers, birds foot trefoil, Sainfoin, chicory, ribwort plantain, salad burnet, alsike clover and sweet clover. Other measures such as planting new native hedges or infilling existing hedges with native species; and putting in field margins of various widths are also included as a measure. If you have received a letter confirming your acceptance to the scheme, contact your advisor for more information.

### Decisions around the date for ending the breeding season

Herds with a very spread out calving pattern generally can't afford not to milk over the coming winter. Such patterns are higher cost and lower profit systems of milk production so the additional margin generated this winter may all be required by the farming family. They can however take steps to correct the calving pattern that they have. This involves taking the following steps: Establish a date on which to end the breeding season this year. July 20th will confine calving to April next year. If you continue to breed until later in the year, you will have later calving cows and the cycle will start all over again; Where calving pattern is spread out, it may be difficult to stop milking altogether for this winter so accept that this winter you will continue to milk the late calvers through the winter; Bringing in extra home reared or buy in suitable early spring calving replacement heifers for next year. They will produce as much milk in the coming year as a late calver and are certainly more likely to remain in the

herd calving in early spring in future years. Next spring either cull this year's late calvers from the parlour or, if accommodation and forage is available, finish them next spring.

