

Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 27th March 2020

Arrangements for the delivery of Teagasc Services to Clients

Teagasc advisory offices are open for pre-arranged appointments only and for staff who are unable to work from home. Each Teagasc location will set up one bio-secure office for essential one-to-one consultations. This will involve a double desk with a clear Perspex divider and a computer with 2 screens. Clients will be asked to wait in their cars to prevent contact in waiting areas and where essential clients may also have to sign forms in the office parking area.

All Teagasc Basic Payment appointments will now be processed over the phone rather than an office consultation. Teagasc staff will contact farmer clients in the coming weeks. BPS application for clients, in so far as possible, will be done over the phone.

All appointments to get Derogation plans completed for farmers will be processed over the phone rather than in an office consultation. Prior to application submission clients will be asked to signify agreement to the application through email or text. Teagasc staff will contact clients to make arrangements.

On farm Teagasc farmer discussion group meetings are being replaced with one hour phone meetings between farmers and their advisor.

Farm visits by Teagasc advisors are taking place at the clients request and only for urgent issues. Social distancing and hygiene protocols will be adhered to. Visits for programmes where work can be completed with no contact with the farmer will continue.

The Teagasc agriculture and horticulture colleges and education centers are closed to students in line with the government decision that schools and third level colleges close over the period 13 March to 29 March. Teagasc education staff, where practical, are working remotely. In the event that the closure of all schools and colleges is prolonged, Teagasc is arranging that guidance for self-study of theory elements of courses will be communicated through online channels.

All Teagasc events have been postponed until further notice. This includes farm walks, conferences, and seminars.

The transfer of information and knowledge to farmers and students will be through regular digital communication methods.

Grass

There is a lot of grass on farms— grass growth is close to normal.

High pressure becomes the main influence on our weather over the coming week, bringing mostly settled conditions with lots of dry weather and light winds, but colder than normal with frosty nights. Source: Met Eireannso it's time to get grazing!

Grazing Plan:

1. Walk the farm this week and identify paddocks that are fit for grazing (firm ground conditions)

2. Take advantage of the dry weather coming this week and graze these paddocks day and night where conditions allow
3. Reduce/ eliminate silage in the diet and increase grass allowances for livestock at grass
4. Strip graze using a backfence to avoid damage and to protect grazed areas
5. If grazing heavy covers or where ground conditions are mixed, hold cows after milking with no access to silage so they graze with an appetite

Getting Fertiliser Out:

Soil Temperatures and rainfall are reasonable for the next 7 days

1. This is an opportunity for farmers who have not spread any fertiliser so far this year to apply some N and increase grass growth on farms.
2. Farmers who spread slurry and fertiliser in late January/ early February should apply N at this stage too.
3. The preferred choice of product is Protected Urea because of its stability in wet weather conditions and because of its benefits to the industry in terms of reduced GHG emissions.
4. The aim is to have 60-70 units of N/acre applied by early April through a combination of slurry and fertiliser application.

Putting a Plan in Place in Case You are Affected by COV-ID.

Thanks to Covid virus we are now in unprecedented times and actions that we thought might be a good idea before are now becoming a must do. We are all going to see changes to the way we work and it is inevitable that some of us are going to become sick or have to go into isolation over the coming weeks. Having a plan in place for such a situation is important.

Cows are still going to have to be milked, animals will still need to be feed, fertiliser spread, cows to be calved. It is important that you put in place a backup system with a friend or neighbour that might be able to help if you and your family have to go into isolation.

It is important to understand that if your situation changes it will probably happen very quickly and you will not have much time to put plans in place last minute. This coupled with the stress of such a situation will more than likely mean that you will miss out or give poor direction on key tasks. You may also have to give instruction over the phone rather than face to face.