

Teagasc Notes for week ended Friday 15th November 2019

Measure your silage stock

Measure your silage stock now for a five month winter.

Figures done with Teagasc Glanbia monitor farmer, Francis Nolan, Coolcullen, Co. Kilkenny, pointed to a shortage. The farm is stocked at 2.6LU / ha and will grow 12 tonnes DM of grass per hectare this year. At the above stocking rate, Francis needs to grow 15 tonnes DM per ha. Francis will sell cull cows, as soon as he can. Francis has also purchased straw & silage to give him feed for a 5 month winter

Shane Fitzgerald, monitor farmer from Portlaw, also measured his silage quantity recently. He had silage left over from last year which allowed him to reseed nearly 30ac this year. Shane plans to sell cull cows, as soon as possible. He calculated that he had enough silage for 5 months

What is surprising from the measurements is that, even though this was a good grass growing year, silage stocks are on target but with no surpluses.

Why to soil sample??

Colin Brennan

When buying a new car, you always ask the salesperson if its petrol or diesel before you fill it and your soils is very similar, we need to feed the soils the nutrients (fuel) it needs and not what we think it needs, like putting diesel in a petrol car.

As the weather has deteriorated over previous weeks, animals are been housed from grass and attention has turned to yard work. However, this is also the time to start planning to maximise grass production for 2020. Soil sampling is the first step in achieving this, as it identifies any deficiencies in your soil. These issues can then be rectified with targeted applications of lime, slurry, farmyard manure and chemical fertiliser. For optimum grass production we require a pH of 6.3, with index 3 for Phosphorus and Potassium in our soil. Over 90% of the samples tested return deficient in either lime, phosphorus or potassium which will be greatly reducing your soils ability to grow grass.

When taking a soil sample it is essential to have a suitable corer that is sampling to a depth of 100mm, take a sample from every 2 to 4 hectares, depending on soil type, previous crops and slope. A sample should consist of 20 cores and taken in a W pattern around the field. Ensure you avoid fields that had recent applications of organic manure as they will return false results. On getting your results, sit down and draw up a Nutrient management plan with your agricultural adviser to get best value for the organic manure on the farm and the chemical fertiliser you will be purchasing.

Look after Our Hedgerows

There is a lot of talk of biodiversity as a key component of environmental sustainability for the future. So what constitutes biodiversity? The Irish landscape has been shaped by millennia of agricultural activity, with nature providing the raw material. Irish farmland is characterised by having a good diversity of habitats such as hedgerows, field margins, ponds and streams, native woodland, bogs and species-rich meadows and pastures. Irish biodiversity therefore depends on farmland habitats.

Everywhere on a farm is a habitat and every farm contributes to biodiversity. Flora and fauna are adapted to live in different habitats. A field of ryegrass or corn contains a small number of species, whereas a hedgerow contains hundreds.

So how do we best manage these hedgerows? Teagasc Countryside Management Specialist, Catherine Keena says: "We are asking contractors and farmers who are trimming hedges to shape

the hedge to a triangular profile from a wider base to allow light at the base, leaving the peak at least 1.5 metres (5 foot) from ground level, or the top of the hedge bank, and allow occasional thorn saplings to grow up into individual trees. This will create the ideal conditions for birds to nest, providing cover from predators above and below the nest, and providing flowers in summer for bees and other pollinators, and berries in autumn for birds and small mammals”. Catherine stressed ‘the quest for neatness and tidiness should not override ecological considerations’.

