Teagasc Advisory Notes

Teagasc Notes for week ended Friday April 19th 2019

DAIRY

Breed maiden heifers to dairy AI

The pros and cons of breeding maiden dairy heifers are listed in Table 1 below. Teagasc recommends that maiden heifers are bred to dairy AI. Contact your Teagasc adviser for a list of dairy AI sires suitable for use on maiden heifers.

The work involved in heat detecting maiden heifers can be reduced by synchronisation. The simplest method is to AI maiden heifers to observed heat for one week and then at the start of the second week to inject unbred heifers with prostaglandin to synchronise their heats. Typically injected heifers will all be bred within the following four to five days.

Table 1. The Pros and Cons of Breeding Maiden Dairy Heifers

Pros	Cons
1. Reduced number of dairy breed bull calves (as heifers have a higher conception rate than cows). 2. Increased genetic gain (heifers should have the best genetics in the herd). 3. Can be bred as a group close to the start of the breeding season. 4. Helps to ensure that the replacement heifer calves are born early the following calving season.	1. Reduced choice of dairy AI bulls (limited by calving ease) – however many of the most suitable bulls now available are high economic breeding index (EBI). 2. Increased labour (if the alternative is to use a stock bull) – but this can be minimised through the use of heat detection aids and synchronisation.

SILAGE MAKING

Fertiliser requirements for 1st Cut Silage:

1. P and K application (slurry and/or chemical fertiliser) should have been applied in March. Some of the N should also have been applied in March

2. Second application of N is now required to reach the units in the Table below

3. Where P and K require-ments have not been met, N should be spread in compounds to meet the Phosphorus and Potassium requirements

4. N should include Sulphur (target 10 units/acre)

Table 2:- 1st Cut Grass Silage N, P & K Requirements (5t/ha DM) & Suggested Fertiliser Programmes					
Soil Index	N kg/ha (units/ac)	P kg/ha (units/ac)	K kg/ha (units/ac)	Fertiliser Options[3]	
				No Slurry	Cattle Slurry 3,000gal/ac
1[1]	125 (100)	40 (32)	175 (140)	3.5 bags/ac 0-7-30 4 bags/ac CAN	3.5 bags/ac 24-2.5-10
2[1]	125 (100)	30 (24)	155 (120)	3 bags/ac 0-7-30 4 bags/ac CAN	3 bags/ac 27-2.5-5.0
3	125 (100)	20 (16)	125 (100)	5 bags/ac 15-3-20 1 bags/ac CAN	3 bags/ac CAN
4[2]	125 (100)	0	0	4 bags/ac CAN	4 bags/ac CAN

BEEF BREEDING

Teagasc Kilkenny Waterford in conjunction with Kildalton College had a very well attended suckler event at the college last week. This event focussed on the key targets for suckler breeding and management of the breeding season is a key element of this. Billy Fraher from the college outlined breeding management on the college farm:

1. 5 star maternal index cows plus replacement heifers for AI run as separate herd for 8 weeks, in paddocks close to handling unit. After 8 weeks these cows go with the stock bull for the final 3 - 4 weeks.
2. Aids for Heat Detection – tail paint & teaser bull with chin ball.
3. Herd observed 3-4 times daily for signs of heat.
4. AM / PM rule – cows in heat in the pm are inseminated the following morning.
5. Records kept of heat activity, AI dates and cows repeating.
6. Tail paint touched up weekly.
7. Cows and heifers that are severed are then put into separate group.
8. Pregnancy scan at least 30 days after heifers & cows are mated.

Farm Safety

Be careful with tractors and ATVs

Farming moves fully outdoors during April as the busy grass and crop growing season gets into top gear. Farm accidents spike during busy periods so heightened safety vigilance is needed. Fatal accidents at this time of year are mainly associated with farm vehicles particularly tractors and ATVs. With tractors it is vital to watch out for bystanders and be conscious of parking vehicles correctly. With ATVs it is vital to keep in control by controlling throttle speed and shifting one's weight as counterbalance. Wear a certified helmet. *Operate ATVs safely.*