

Teagasc Notes for week ended Friday February 15th

One in Four Farms are Short of Fodder

A recent Teagasc survey has shown that one in four farms are short of silage this Spring. The deficit is 10-15%. That's the equivalent of one weeks feeding between now and the end of March. It sounds like a small deficit but can become very significant very quickly as the Spring progresses if you don't react now. So what action needs to be taken:

1. Do a fodder budget immediately if you have any concern at all that you might have a deficit. Talk to your local adviser.
2. Get fertiliser out, as conditions improve. It was very evident in 2018 that the farmers that continued to spread fertiliser came through the fodder shortage more easily than those that didn't.
3. Return stock to grazing as soon as conditions allow – on farm measurements indicate that there is more grass on farms this spring than in previous years. Even if you have to re-house, getting some stock out for 10-15 days can save a lot of silage.
4. Stretch silage by feeding additional meals. This requires actually restricting access to silage e.g. if your deficit is 25%, where you might normally put out 4 bales of silage you are now putting out 3 bales and feeding 2-3 kg extra meals to fill the energy gap.
5. Sell animals as they become fit for sale/slaughter
6. Avoid panic buying- purchase feed in advance if possible.
7. Ensure finance is available to purchase additional feed if required

We cannot predict what the weather is going to be like for the next 6-7 weeks and I think its largely irrelevant in terms of the plan you need to put in place today. Plan for needing fodder til early April. If we have a good Spring, you will have fodder left over. However, if we have a bad Spring, then you will avoid a lot of stress on yourself by taking action, at an already busy time of the year.

Getting ready for your Bord Bia Quality Assurance Audit

There have been numerous calls recently from cattle farmers about their Bord Bia assurance audits and what steps they can take to pass. Many farmers have recently received letters from Bord Bia informing them of an upcoming visit.

Here are some points to help you in preparation for this visit.

- The Bovine Register Herd book has to be available and all births, deaths and movements have to be up to date. All movement permits and knackery receipts must be available to be viewed by the auditor on request. Many farmers also keep their recent cattle purchases/sales dockets from Marts, Factories etc. as well close at hand. Remember to have all your cattle cards available on the day as well.
- The animal remedy purchase and usage records must be completed and up to date. According to Bord Bia the majority of problems uncovered during an audit leading to failure relate to record keeping on animal remedies and medicines. It is advisable that farmers have a full record of all remedy/medical purchases and usages prior to inspection. Information recorded must include date of purchase, medicine name, quantity purchased and name & address of supplier. The farmer then needs to record date of administration, name of medicine, quantity given, identification of animal, date of end of withdrawal period, name of

person giving the medicine/remedy or name of prescribing vet. Bord Bia also provides a farm book to complete in relation to the Animal health Plan where the dosing and or vaccination programme is outlined.

- A feed purchase record also has to be completed preferably in the Bord Bia farm book whereby all feed purchased is recorded. All receipts and delivery dockets must be kept and retained; often the official receipt/invoice will include all the necessary information required.
- The Farm Safety Risk Assessment book also has to be completed and available for inspection. This normally is an assessment specific to the farm outlining what steps are to be taken to maximise safety on that farm.
- A pesticide usage record will also be required to be completed if being used. Information required will include product name, PCS number, crop of intended use, area treated, volume of water used, date applied and professional usage number.
- A sustainability survey also must be completed preferably before the auditor arrives on the farm whereby the farming system is assessed in terms of efficiency and carbon footprint. This survey can be done on-line on the computer or a paper version can be requested on (062) 54900 from Agri Data directly.
- Don't forget to have your Farm Safety & Quality Assurance signs visible and displayed in your yard, your bait points mapped out for rodents, footbaths with disinfectant located at entrance of farmyard and a functional medicine cabinet which can be locked for the storage of medicines.

The inspections itself normally lasts approximately 2 hours and always remember to have read your most recent letter from Bord Bia which will have noted a few specific areas for improvement on your farm following your last inspection. Try not to have the same issues re-occurring. There is a substantial amount of paperwork to be completed and it is advisable not to leave it all to the day before the visit!