

## Teagasc Notes for week ended Friday February 22<sup>nd</sup>

### Get Stock to Grass Now

At the time of writing these notes, weather conditions were excellent and the forecast was good, so what actions should be taken under those conditions:

1. Where livestock have been housed, livestock need to get out grazing. Lower cost, less workload and increase production. Milk solids increase and liveweight gains increase on grass compared to silage. Covers are heavy on all farms so it's important to get as many categories of stock out grazing as possible. Calved cows should be out grazing day and night. Otherwise it will be difficult to get the whole farm grazed by the 1<sup>st</sup> week in April.
2. Minimise supplementation levels (particularly silage) and maximise grass intake while weather permits. Where cows are grazing full-time and consuming 12-13 kg DM of grass, supplementation rates of 3-4 kg concentrates will support cows that will peak at 26-27 litres.
3. Where there is no N spread on the grazing platform, now is the ideal chance to spread N
4. Graze heavier areas (clay/peat soils) on the farm while conditions are dry. Maximise grass utilisation and minimise damage. Let livestock out to areas susceptible to damage by day and a dryer paddock by night to minimise any risk
5. Take this opportunity to get slurry out on low covers on your farm. Follow grazed areas with slurry. Use a trailing shoe on higher grass covers up to 1200 kgDM/ha



### Labour Saving Tips

The following are some of the approaches used by labour efficient farms:

**Machinery work:** This accounts for 20% of the work on farm. The most efficient farms contract out a high proportion. Also, there is less total machinery time on the most efficient farms, indicating that the contractors may be better equipped to carry out the tasks more efficiently.

**Milking OAD in early lactation:** Some herds are milking cows once daily the first six weeks of calving which reduces work. This practice could save 1 to 2 hours a day depending on parlour size. It will result in reduced milk production during this period and over the subsequent lactation, with some trials showing a 6% reduction in milk volume over the complete lactation.

**Night feeding of silage:** Feeding cows late in the evening reduce night time calvings. Trials have shown that restricting silage feeding time resulted in 9% less night calvings (0:30am to 6:30am) compared with cows with full access to silage. Fifteen % of cows still calved by night and 85% by day when silage feeding time was restricted and 24% calved by night and 76% by day when cows had continuous access to silage.

OAD calf rearing: A Moorepark study on commercial herds quantified overall labour requirement for calf care. Total calf care time (up to 8 weeks) was 23 seconds (sec) per calf for herds that fed calves milk once daily compared to herds that fed calves twice daily (36 sec). Overall 36% savings in total calf care time could be achieved if calves were fed milk once daily.

Calf health: Follow the 1-2-3 rule of colostrum management. Getting the right amount of colostrum into calves as early as possible is the key to good calf management. Calves that get adequate colostrum are less likely to get sick, will thrive better and consequently will have lower demand on labour.

### **The Simple 1,2,3 of Calf Rearing!**

Getting the right amount of colostrum into calves as early as possible is the secret to good calf management. Calves that get enough colostrum are less likely to get sick and will thrive better.

Use milk from the

- 1st milking to feed calves within
- 2 hours of birth
- 3 litres of clean safe milk.

