

Teagasc Notes for week ended Friday July 12th 2019

Grazing Tips This Week

- Graze covers of 1,400 kg DM/ha and graze down to 4 cm.
- Farms should be walked at least twice weekly for correct decisions to be made when managing grass at this time of year.
- Cut surplus grass as bales (PastureBase Ireland update illustrates that there is surplus grass nationally).
- Don't graze heavy covers. Skip and cut as surplus bales.
- Follow your fertiliser plan and keep your Nitrogen strategy up-to-date
- Slurry should be spread where silage/surplus bales are taken off. Where there is no slurry available on farms, a high K compound fertiliser should be spread instead to replace the high K off-take.
- Using low emission slurry spreading techniques (trailing shoe or band spreader) can save you money by retaining more nitrogen (3 units/1,000 gallons). It also helps to reduce ammonia emissions to atmosphere. If you have applied for a nitrates derogation (>170kgs/ha), you are obliged to use low emission slurry spreading machinery since the 15th of June.

Protein Levels in dairy Ration

Teagasc recommends that dairy farmers should consider the protein content of dairy ration when buying. "Grazing high forage quality with sufficient protein, there is no response to additional protein, as the energy intake is limited. Choose a high energy ration (UFL value of >0.95 as fed) to ensure adequate energy supply to utilise the nitrogen (N) in grass effectively".

Table 1 shows the recommended protein specification to be used to feed to dairy cows at a moderate rate (up to 3kg/head/day).

Table 1: Ration crude protein level for three yield levels.

Milk Solids Yield	2.0-2.2	1.8-2.0	1.6-1.8
High Quality Grass	14*	12*	12*
*Ration Crude Protein (CP) %			

Heifer Weights

Having replacement heifers at the correct weight for their age at the start of August is critical to their long-term future in the dairy herd. February-born weanling and yearling heifers should be 30% and 70%, respectively, of their pre-calving bodyweight on August 1, if they are to be successfully calved at two years of age. Assuming a pre-calving weight of 550kg, this equates to approximately 165kg for the weanling and at least 385kg for the in-calf heifer.

To establish how the heifers are performing and take the guess work out of the equation, regular weighing of the heifers is a vital management practice. Average weights are of no use because all they tell you is the story of the average heifer. What about the heifers above average or more critically the heifer's that are below average. Individual weights allow you to split the group in

smaller groups that can be given preferential treatment in terms of grass and meal feeding to allow them to make up ground on target weights. As a rough rule of thumb, separate heifers that are 10% or more below target – for weanlings this is heifers weighing 150kg or less and for yearlings it's heifers weighing 350kg or less. There is still plenty of time to make sure that they catch up with their heavier counterparts

The heifers that are above target may only need good quality grass to stay on target and therefore a saving on meal costs can be made. It is vital to weigh all the heifers about every two months and keep the situation under review.

Calves are selective grazers and should not be kept more than 4 days in a paddock. If forced to graze poor quality grass, their performance in terms of weight gain will fall. Use the yearling heifers to graze down these paddocks and keep the calves moving along to fresh grass. Topping after the yearlings or targeting a paddock for round baling in the next round can also be used to clean up paddocks to ensure good quality grass for the next round.

Event

Teagasc will host a reseeding event on the farm of Eddie Gavin, Duninga, Goresbridge, Co. Kilkenny (signposted from Paulstown) on Friday the 12th of July starting 10.30-11.30. There will be a series of stands dealing with the various aspects of reseeding and also a demonstration of reseeding options. This event is KT approved for dairy, beef and sheep discussion groups.

