

Shinagh Dairy Farm Report 30-05-2019

Farm Update

There are 232 cows milking (2 milking cows were sold recently). We are decreasing cow numbers in order to remain under 250kg of organic nitrogen per hectare in 2019. The plan is to farm under the 250kg/ha without exporting slurry this year or in future. Previous years we exported slurry onto land we purchased growing silage off.

Breeding started on May 3rd. All cows are tail painted and this is topped up on a regular basis. 94% of the herd were submitted for AI in the first 21 days of breeding (97% have been submitted in 26 days). We are finished with dairy AI straws now and are using an easy calving Hereford AI bull from the Dairy Beef Index for the rest of AI. Vasectomised bulls are now running with the herd as an aid to heat detection. The replacement heifers were bred to AI on observed heat for 7 days and then got an injection of Prostaglandin to bring the remaining animals on heat. 50 out of the 53 heifers were bred to AI. A stock bull will breed the remainder and pick up any repeats to AI.

The farm grass cover is 736kg/ha or 185kg/cow. Growth rate for the last week was 92 kg/ day. The herd is stocked at 3.97 cows per hectare with a demand of 67kg/ha, this has allowed us to stop feeding supplements. 4 ha of silage ground have been reseeded with a two cut silage grass mixture. Magnesium is supplied in the drinking troughs daily by adding magnesium flakes to them.

The current co-op milk details are as follows: 23 litres/day at 4.19% fat, 3.65% protein, 4.85% lactose, 133,000 SCC and 9,000 TBC. That's 1.86 kg of milk solids per cow per day. We are over our peak milk supply, we aim to keep the drop from peak as slow as possible and less than 10% per month decrease. To do this we strive to always have the herd grazing high quality grass at covers between 1300 and 1600 kg/ha. This will mean taking surplus grass out for bales on a regular basis (and possibly feeding those same bales back the following week if growth drops). But if we keep a "safety" amount of cover per cow (and not cut surplus paddocks regularly as needed), we will always be grazing grass a little too strong. That will reduce milk yield and especially milk protein.

This round of fertiliser we are using a protected Urea product. We have taken a decision to use protected urea products instead of CAN products because they are better from an environmental point of view and they are cheaper per unit of nitrogen. The product is 29:0:14 plus 3.5% sulphur.

Updates are on the Shinagh website: <http://www.shinaghdairy.ie/>