

Shinagh Dairy Farm Report 18-11-2019

Farm Update

There are 180 cows still milking. Cows are being dried off based on their condition score and lactation. All first lactation cows get 12 weeks dry off. We are milking OAD since Friday. Cows are on 3 kg of ration.

The farm grass cover is 732kg/ha and we have finished grazing. We need to leave this average farm cover to have enough grass for our big grass demand in spring at turn out. With a high (90%) of the herd calving in 6 weeks we have a high feed demand.

The current co-op milk details are as follows: 10.41 litres/day at 5.51% fat, 4.53% protein, 4.36% lactose, 146,000 SCC and 18,000 TBC (this is the last milk result while still milking twice a day). That's 1.07 kg of milk solids per cow per day.

Our replacement heifers are due home from the contract rearer before the end of the month. In keeping with our target of an 18% replacement rate, which is the optimum in terms of making genetic gain and having a mature herd, we have surplus incalf heifers for sale before the end of the year. We have been running at 8% not in calf or less each year so this is allowing us to cull 10% on top of this for other reasons. The average lactation age of the herd currently is 4.2 lactations and our target is to increase this to 4.5 lactations, by having a reduced % of heifers entering the herd and retaining cows longer in the herd.

We have sensitivity tested individual cows and the bulk tank milk for bacteria and antibiotic sensitivity. We will not be using selective dry cow treatment this year because we have *Streptococcus agalactiae* present in the bulk milk sample. The advice we received is that if you have this bacteria present in the bulk milk sample it is better to "re-set the clock" and remove this easily controlled bacteria by using a blanket dry cow treatment. Next year we should be clear of this particular bacteria and we will select consistently low cell count cows with no history of mastitis to just get a teat sealant dry cow treatment.

We have done a complete bio-diversity study of the farm and we are now in the process of drawing up a plan to increase and improve our bio-diversity. We were delighted that 6.9% of the farm are already habitats. As part of our plan to improve this we intend to take the fence wires out from some of the south facing ditches (a max of 2 meters from the ditch edge) to allow the natural vegetation to grow, we may plant some wild flower species in this area eventually. It will be important to ensure no fertiliser is spread in this area as this will favour normal grass rather than the other species we are trying to encourage. We know the cows will graze at least a half meter under the wire so the loss of productive area will be small.

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