



# Worm resistance evident in Robertstown



A mini dosing trial has indicated high resistance to some worming products on Ricky Milligan's Kildare farm, writes Ciarán Lenehan

**R**icky Milligan farms 64ha at Robertstown, Co Kildare, in partnership with his father Henry. They run a spring-calving suckler herd, finishing male progeny as steers at 24 months, as well as a dairy calf-to-beef enterprise.

Ricky currently runs 40 cows, with a genetic base of Hereford crossed with Simmental and Limousin. A small number of his cows are first-cross from the dairy herd. The mature herd is at an average replacement index of €104 and quite well-balanced for both maternal and terminal traits.

Ricky has the heaviest average spring-calving cow in the programme at 735kg, but his calves' 200-day weight is fourth highest at 294kg.

## Dairy beef

Given the queries and responses on the dairy beef section of our Ploughing live demonstrations last week, these types of systems are becoming more and more popular across the country.

Indeed, many of our BETTER farmers have turned, or are turning toward dairy calf to beef enterprises in order to boost their output, having reached their own personal limits in terms of suckler cow numbers.

"They're a cheap means of getting heads on the ground," Ricky told me as we walked through a field of his sucklers, "the thing about these [sucklers] is, half of your stocking rate is not for sale."

"Having said that, I don't think that I'd go full dairy beef, I'm a believer in spreading the risk. This year we've bought in 39 Hereford-cross (Holstein/Montbeliarde) calves. They came in three batches - one of 18 and one of 12 early in the spring, and the last nine just before Good Friday. We get all of our calves from the same farm in Tipperary."

Once breeding gets going in the suckler herd, the dairy calves run ahead of the cows and get the pick of the grass. I'll keep them on just under 1kg of ration during the first grazing season.

"It's only really in August that they're developed enough to eat big volumes of grass," Ricky said.

In terms of managing these calves, on



Ricky Milligan farms in Robertstown Co Kildare.

<b>Fixed costs</b>	€550/ha
<b>€/hr labour</b>	<€5/hr
<b>Cashflow</b>	>€5/hr
<b>Calving pattern</b>	Spring
<b>Farm system</b>	Suckler/calf to steer and heifer beef
<b>Farm size</b>	64ha
<b>2016 gross margin</b>	€632/ha
<b>Land type</b>	Free-draining/clay

the trial was to investigate the prevalence of resistance to wormers across Irish drystock farms.

Two products were tested, ivermectin (IV) and fenbendazole-based (FB). Calves were split into two for dosing, such that gender and faecal egg counts were similar for both groups.

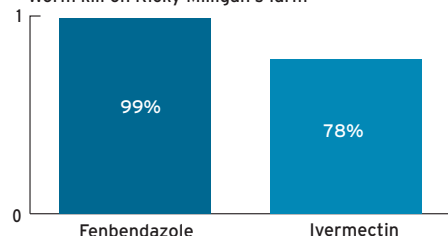
The IV product was injected under the skin and the FB product was an oral drench. Dosing rates and weights were strictly adhered to.

Two weeks post-dosing, the IV calves showed a 78% kill according to faecal samples, while FB had achieved a 99% kill, indicating that there is some IV resistance on Ricky's farm.

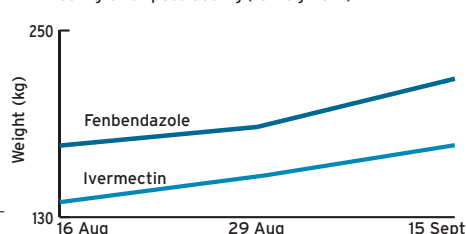
The IV calves actually grew faster in the fortnight post-dosing than the FB calves (ADG 1.13kg vs. 0.87kg), which is likely due to the more intense worm kill from FB causing slightly more stress to the calves.

One month post-dosing the benefits of the more-complete FB worm kill showed in a 0.24kg daily average daily gain response for the complete month post-treatment (1.41kg vs. 1.17kg).

**Figure 1**  
Worm kill on Ricky Milligan's farm



**Figure 2**  
Calf growth post-dosing (16 Aug 2017)



arrival they immediately receive an electrolyte/vitamin mix and then 20ml of vecoxan within a few days. The latter measure is taken on veterinary advice after an outbreak of blood scour some years back.

Ricky feeds his calves 6l of milk replacer daily, split in two equal feeds at

consistent times. Milk replacer is 24% crude protein and fed at a rate of 125g/l.

## Dosing trial

Ricky recently partook in a dosing trial as part of Teagasc Walsh Fellow Researcher Anne Kelleher's postgraduate studies. Anne is based at Grange and the aim of

**Table 1:** Dairy-beef calf (spring '17 born Hereford X) dosing ingredient comparison on Ricky Milligan's farm

	FEC* pre-dose	FEC post-dose	% worm kill	ADG** post-dose	ADG** response
Ivermectin	186	44	78	1.17	
Fenbendazole	171	2	99	1.41	0.24

\*Faecal egg count (eggs/g), \*\*Average daily gain (kg).

## \*Guide to traffic lights

### Fixed costs:

- <€350/ha
- <€550/ha
- >€550/ha

### €/hr worked:

- >€12.50/hr (as prop of net profit)
- <€12.50/hr
- <€5/hr

### Cashflow: (consecutive months without sales- inc. sheep)

- <5
- <7
- >7



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# Growth holding but grazing difficult

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**M**ore heavy rain in the past few days has meant that housing has started on many farms in the west and northwest.

If young stock are being housed, they need to be monitored closely for a few days for any signs of pneumonia. Grass DM is now low and finishing cattle would be better off housed if grazing condi-

tions are very difficult.

Animals standing at the back of hedges seeking shelter from wind and rain won't put on weight. Animals that are being fed already at grass will acclimatise better to a diet of silage and meal indoors.

Weaning is also taking place on a lot of farms. In current conditions, it is better to house cows for a few days during the weaning process as weaned cows can cause untold damage to a paddock overnight when ground conditions are difficult.

When weaned, light wean-

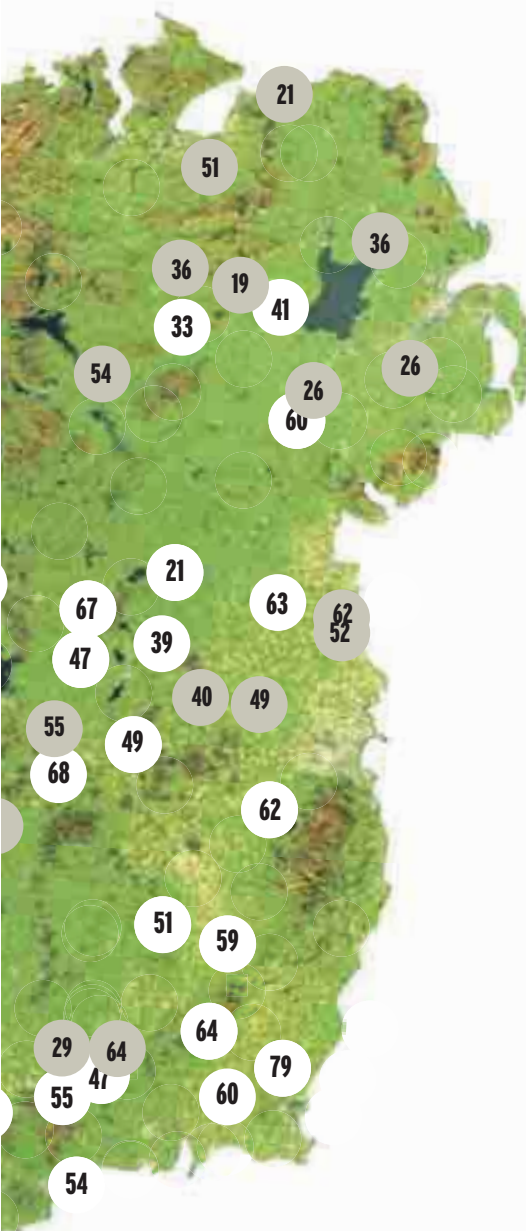
lings are ideal stock to go back out to finish grazing. They will be a lot cheaper to feed outside, will be healthier and will probably put on more weight when compared to weight gain indoors.

These light stock won't damage paddocks as much either. Growth is holding well on our measuring farms, with growth of 55kg DM/ha being recorded over the past seven days. This is up from 47kg DM/ha the previous week and will help to prolong the grazing season on dryer farms but still shouldn't alter the closing up

plan over the next few weeks. Plans should be in place to start closing paddocks next week on dry farms to ensure that cattle can be turned out early next spring.

Pick some of the driest paddocks to close first, preferably close to the yard so stock can be easily turned out in early spring.

If weather turns bad, stock can be easily turned back inside until weather improves. Make sure to have magnesium licks out with suckler cows in wet weather and especially around weaning.



Source: PastureBase Ireland, Agrinet and Irish Farmers Journal.



**Cathal Breen**  
Wexford

System	Suckler to steer beef
Soil type	Heavy clay
Avg farm cover	497kg DM/ha
Grass demand	52
Growth	51

The recent spell of bad weather has left ground conditions wet and as a result it is becoming more difficult to utilise grass. There is a reasonably good supply of grass currently on the farm as I start closing up paddocks for the spring.

All of the ground got over 20 units of nitrogen before the deadline and I have a lot of farmyard manure which will be put out on low-index paddocks as I close them. A group of steers which I am meal-feeding at grass will be housed this week as the dry matter is well reduced in the grass.

I am going to start weaning spring-born calves this week. Cows with calves suckling are currently being supplemented with hay and hi-magnesium licks as a precaution against grass tetany.

I weighed my group of dairy-bred calves last week and they are doing close to 1kg/day since the last weighing and I am very happy with this. All of the weanlings and steers will get a dose this week for lungworm.



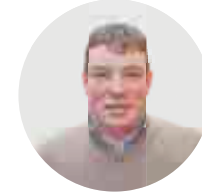
**Tommy Holmes**  
Mayo

System	suckler to bull beef
Soil type	Variable
Avg farm cover	1,441kg DM/ha
Grass demand	28
Growth	39

The weather has most certainly been challenging up here in the northwest over the past few weeks. Luckily, I managed to spread fertiliser on drier ground around the home block before the chemical fertiliser deadline closed earlier this month. I went with a bag of 27-2.5-5/acre as it was left in the yard and the added nitrogen will drive on grass as I plan to extend my grazing season well into November if the weather stays right.

The only stock I have housed at the minute are my bulls which I intend to have finished before Christmas. Autumn-born calves are content outdoors, even with the recent bad spell of weather. I hope to get slurry on paddocks as I close them off for next spring but ground conditions will have to improve considerably.

Teagasc are holding a Grass 10 walk on my farm next Thursday 5 October. Closing up ground for the spring, soil fertility and paddock infrastructure will be the main points of discussion on the day. All are welcome.



**Shane Gleeson**  
Limerick

System	suckler to weaning
Soil type	Variable
Avg farm cover	1,101kg DM/ha
Grass demand	21
Growth	50

I have recently weaned 15 cows indoors. Weanlings will be put on 2kg of ration daily until sale. I plan to sell the bulls and keep most of the heifers. The weather is still playing havoc here with low land extremely wet. Fortunately I have nearly 50 acres of dry land that is holding most of my stock. The dairy-bred calves continue to receive 1.5kg of ration at grass. Scanning results showed a number of late-calving cows and some empty cows. I plan to cull all these over the winter and purchase in-calf heifers or second-calved cows. This will result in a 12-week calving spread next year which is important given I am farming part-time. I am happy with the decision to focus on one calving period on the farm as it will help concentrate my labour input. The driest land received pig slurry and nitrogen before the closing date and I have seen good growth since.

I plan to begin closing up paddocks in the next 10-14 days in rotation with 15 acres closed each week.



**Ger O'Dwyer**  
Tullamore Farm

System	Suckler to beef
Soil type	mixed
Avg farm cover	1,034kg DM/ha
Demand	31
Growth	55

Growth is holding well on Tullamore Farm, with 55kg/DM/ha being recorded over the past seven days, which is well ahead of demand at 31kg/DM/ha. Average farm cover is 1,034kg/DM/ha and we currently have 33 days ahead.

We weaned a group of cows last week using a nose paddle in the calves which restricted suckling.

Calves stayed with the cows for a few days but couldn't suck. The next batch of cows and calves are due to be weaned this week.

Calves have received their pneumonia booster vaccine and a dose prior to weaning to make sure lungs are clear around the stress of weaning.

Sheep are arriving on the farm on Thursday and will be dosed and housed for a few days as part of their quarantine period once they arrive on the farm. The sheep will start grazing the new reseeded once turned back outdoors.

We plan to start closing paddocks on 1 October to ensure we have grass next spring.

## 10-year average grass growth

kg DM/ha/day

