



Moorepark open event 2021

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Knowledge Transfer

Teagasc Moorepark will host an open event for the dairy industry across September 14, 15 and 16. The purpose of this event is to highlight technologies and practices that deliver profitable dairy systems while mitigating gaseous emissions, improving water quality, and promoting biodiversity.

The event affords an opportunity to view the latest research and to discuss future challenges and solutions. Admission to the event is free. Pre-booking is required. Please check the Teagasc website (www.teagasc.ie) for further details. The event will be fully compliant with Covid-19 guidelines.

Targets for September grazing

August 2021 certainly brought its challenges for grass management, varying from drought conditions to weeks of high rainfall depending on location.

Nonetheless, where growth rates have returned to relative normality the focus should have shifted toward autumn grazing plans. The headline targets for mid September are to reach an average farm cover of 1,100kg DM per ha, with a rotation

length of about 35 days. This is a good guide for most farms but will need to be adjusted depending on circumstances, e.g., heavy farms or those with autumn-calving herds shouldn't go much above 950kg DM per ha by mid September.

Completing an autumn grass budget in PastureBase is the best means of figuring out what's best for your farm. Speak to your advisor for details.

Practical advice on reducing lameness problems

As a follow-up to our August notes on lameness, Ger Cusack, Comeragh Vets, and Ned Dunphy, FRS Network offer some further practical hints and tips from their experience on the ground.

They say that the most prevalent lesion types they find in lame cows are white line disease, sole haemorrhages, and overgrown claws, in other words mechanical lesions.

The following can be done to keep these to a minimum as we move into autumn:

- provide cows with good walking surfaces – now is the time to fix problems;
- allow cows to walk at their own pace, especially on longer distances;
- cows naturally tend to slow down in autumn so allow extra time for herding; do not rush with a dog or quad bike;
- allow cows to return to the paddock directly after milking if possible, avoid holding in the yard;
- use a timed or remote-controlled exit opening system on the paddock – this allows cows to exit for milking at their own pace and the farmer just rounds up the stragglers;
- provide adequate space in the collecting yard so that cows are not bumping or jostling; and,
- deal with problem cows promptly. Some farms could consider a regular standing arrangement with a hoof trimmer/vet in autumn to prevent treatment delays.

Signpost actions for September

- Spread lime on low pH soils this month. Applying lime will increase nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) availability, reduce chemical fertiliser requirements and nitrous oxide (GHG) emissions.
- Empty your slurry tanks now. Don't wait until the deadline and the risk of poor ground conditions.
- Continue to focus on autumn grazing targets. Extra days at grass will result in less silage fed and less slurry handling.
- Weigh replacement heifers now and take remedial action if needed. Calving heifers down at 24 months reduces methane emissions from the system.
- Implement a dosing and vaccination programme for young stock. Healthier animals have increased animal performance and reduced emissions.
- Book a milk recording. Milk recording will allow you improve culling decisions. Fewer low-producing animals in the herd equals lower emissions per kg of milk sold.

Climate actions for September



Reducing TB risk

Here are some steps you can take to reduce the risk of a TB breakdown in your herd:

- check for badger activity including setts through September and October; notify the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) if you find any and prevent cattle accessing them by fencing off the setts;
- troughs should be at least 1m off the ground – do not feed concentrates off the ground as badgers may contaminate the area;
- badger-proof feed stores and sheds;
- ensure your perimeter fences are stock proof;
- reduce the risk of introducing infected cattle into your herd: source cattle from herds which are TB clear in recent years and look for cattle with a recent TB test date – consider isolating

them and doing a post-movement TB test to protect the rest of your herd;

- reduce the risk of residual infection: if you had a TB breakdown previously, cull older cattle that were exposed to infection at that time;
- cull any cattle which ever tested inconclusive;
- use breeding bulls which are genetically TB resistant, using the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) TB scores;
- if contract rearing, discuss ways to reduce TB risk with the contractor and prepare for how you would manage a TB breakdown on either the home farm or the rearing farm; and,
- please see information videos on TB at: www.bovinetb.ie.

Source: ERAD, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

A clean environment can help control mastitis



This is a relatively quiet time of year on most spring-calving dairy

farms and probably even with autumn-calving herds where calving is just beginning. Now is the time to make sure that your cows will be housed in a suitable environment for the winter months. Think back to last spring – did you notice rain getting in, broken mats making cleaning difficult, or pooling of slurry on floors? While these problems individually may appear minor, when they are all added together they dramatically increase the risk of a cow getting mastitis.

Work through our checklist to make your accommodation winter ready:

- power wash and disinfect cubicles, calving and feeding areas;

- check you have enough cubicles (at least one per cow) and where suitable alternative housing arrangements can be made;
- service automatic scrapers;
- fix leaking water troughs, broken cubicles, damaged mats, and broken gutters;
- check all lights are working both inside and outside sheds to make it easier and safer to move and monitor cows; and,
- maintenance – do you need to replace gates or repair feeding barriers or other areas of the shed? Currently, there is a delay in getting building materials, so plan ahead.

For more information, see 'Management Note L' in 'Farm Guidelines', now available online at: <https://animalhealthireland.ie/programmes/cellcheck/farm-guidelines/>.

Milk recording on the rise

The number of cows being milk recorded has increased by over 40% in the past two years to over 930,000, according to recent ICBF reports. The imminent change in legislation around using antibiotics at drying off is likely to be one of the key reasons for the big rise in milk recording.

However, in addition to tracking somatic cell count (SCC), milk recording offers other benefits including adding value to stock that

are sold and increasing the rate of herd improvement by identifying cows for culling or breeding to beef. Milk recording samples can also be used for pregnancy diagnosis and disease screening.

It's never too late to start milk recording. Those starting now will be able to establish a baseline SCC for their individual cows to track success around drying-off time and better prepare themselves for the changes ahead.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Food for thought

The Teagasc strategy applies the total worker health model to support farmers with both health and wellbeing and health and safety. Excess body weight is associated with increased injury, cardiovascular disease, cancers, Covid-19 disease severity, musculoskeletal disorders and depression. An Irish study involving Teagasc found that 62% of male farmer study participants were overweight or obese. A high proportion of diets had a low intake of fruits and vegetables, dairy products and fish, and a high intake of meat, fried foods, salt, and sugary and/or salty snacks. Further information on healthy eating is available from the HSE online guide 'How to Eat Well'. Also, Teagasc is holding half-day health and safety courses in all regions. They are a great way to update your knowledge and motivation on farm



Fruit and veg for health.

health and safety. The course is a requirement for the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme 2 (TAMS II) submission grant claim. The current closing date for TAMS II applications is November 5, 2021. Contact your advisor if you want support in making an application.