



BEEF

October 2014

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Time to take soil samples

Teagasc's soils database shows that only one in 10 grassland soil samples analysed between 2007 and 2013 have the optimum balance of the major soil nutrients to maximise grass production. Soil analysis is the most cost-effective tool to optimise fertiliser and manure applications. An up-to-date soil test report will provide a sound footing to tailor fertiliser requirements on a field-by-field basis and ensures maximum potential return from the spend on fertilisers.

Now is the best time to take soil samples and plan lime/fertiliser/manure programmes for 2015. For grassland soils, request an S1 test to check the soil's lime status, and phosphorus



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In this issue

The Beef Conference takes place on Thursday October 9 in Athlone.

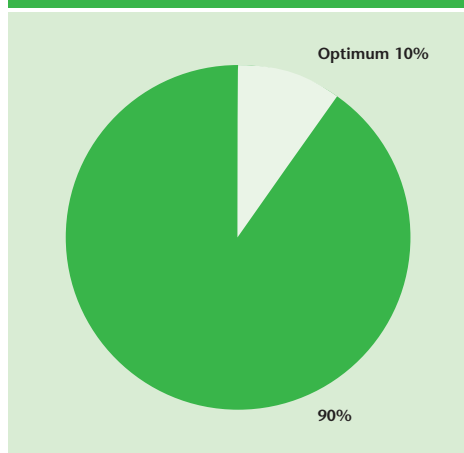
- 90% of soil samples do not have the optimum balance of nutrients for maximum grass production
- Remember you have to record your 2014 spring-born calves.

(P) and potassium (K) levels. Make sure that fields are sampled correctly and take note of the following:

- for sampling purposes divide the farm into fields or areas of between 2 and 4ha;
- take separate samples from areas that differ in soil type, previous cropping history, slope, drainage or persistent poor yields;
- avoid any unusual spots such as old fences, ditches, etc.; and,
- do not sample a field for P and K until three to six months after the last application of fertiliser P and K (now is a good time to soil sample). Where lime has been applied, allow a time lag of two years before sampling for lime requirements; and, follow a 'W' soil sampling pattern to ensure that the sample is representative of the entire field. Ensure that all soil cores are taken to the full 10cm depth.

Good overall fertility – all grass:

soil pH >6.2; soil P and K index 3 or 4.



Soil analysis costs €0.50c/ac/year for an S1 test, which will ensure cost-effective crop nutrition.

BTAP qualification

If you are in a BTAP discussion group, October is the month where any outstanding issues must be cleared up if you are to qualify for payment later in the year. The programme for 2014 formally closes on October 31 and all BTAP meetings will end on or before October 17. You need to ensure that you have attended the required number of meetings/events as the first step to qualifying for payment. The second area is that you have completed the selected tasks before the end of the month. A large number of

people this year have opted for the profit monitor so please ensure that your adviser has all the data required before the middle of the month. If you have any queries contact your adviser well in advance of the closing date. There will be a new replacement discussion programme launched by the Department for beef farmers in 2015 as part of the Rural Development Programme. Further details will be announced on how this will operate over the coming few months.

National Beef Conference

The theme of this year's conference is 'Improved Feeding and Breeding of Suckler Cows to Increase Profitability'.

The conference is a BTAP-approved event and will take place in the Hodson Bay Hotel in Athlone on Thursday October 9. Admission is free and registration is at 2.30pm.

The conference will run until early evening with an interval between the two sessions.

A leaflet detailing the conference papers and speakers is included with your newsletter and further details will appear in the farming press or log on to <http://www.teagasc.ie/events/EventsBy.aspx>.

Relative value of feeds



Ration prices should be lower this year.

Thankfully, after a good grass-growing year there should be no real shortage of good quality winter forage. Stocks of silage and hay will have been well replenished and certainly for anyone buying fodder, prices will have eased compared with previous years.

On the ration front it looks as though good yields nationally and globally have reduced prices of barley and wheat. Other concentrates such as maize meal and soyabean meal are also trading at lower prices this year. The

consequence of this is that ration prices should be back close on €30/t this year, which is good for beef farmers but is probably more significant for pig and poultry producers.

The relative feed value table (**Table 1**) rates all other feeds against barley and soyabean meal where rolled barley costs €190/t and soyabean is €465/t.

If you can buy any of the feeds at or below the price in the column 'Value (per t as fed)' then they represent good value.

Table 1 – Relative feed value.

Meal type	Value (per t as fed)	Meal type	Value (per t as fed)
Barley	€190	Citrus pulp	€172
Soyabean meal	€465	Soya hulls	€198
Wheat	€195	Maize gluten	€224
Oats	€157	Maize distillers	€248
Maize meal	€218	Brewers' grains (20.5% DM)	€78
Unmolassed beet pulp	€204	Fodder beet	€36
Rapeseed meal	€268		

Feeding weanlings

Having weanlings eating some meals prior to housing will reduce the stress of housing and weaning. It will also keep weanling performance on target. The big struggle every year with weanlings is getting them to achieve around 0.6kg/day throughout the winter.

Silage quality

One of the big factors in how weanlings perform over the winter is silage quality. Light weanlings in particular will not perform on copious amounts of average to poor quality silage immediately after housing. Ideally you should offer more concentrate at the start of the winter to weanlings and this can be reduced after Christmas and again prior to turnout. Silage quality will determine how much concentrate you need as can be seen from **Table 2**.

Other factors also need to be considered when trying to get performance from weanlings.

- Ideally fresh feed should be offered daily and stale feed regularly cleared away and not allowed to build up.
- How often are water drinkers cleaned out? Fresh clean water needs to be given to all housed stock.
- Can all animals feed at the one time when meal is being fed? Are animals grouped according to size? Not allowing adequate trough space will impact on performance.
- Health status. Have weanlings been well covered for stomach worms and lung worms prior to housing? Do they need a dose after housing? Will they be covered for fluke? Are they adequately treated for lice?
- Have I had issues with pneumonia in weanlings after housing? Should they be vaccinated? Can ventilation be improved in the shed?

Table 2. Concentrate needed proportionate to silage quality to achieve target daily gain

DMD	Poor (62%)	Average (Mid 65-68%)	High (<72%)
ADG 0.6kg/day	2.5kg	2.0kg	1.0kg

Beef Data Programme

Remember you will have to record data for the Beef Data Programme on your 2014 spring-born calves once they reach five months of age. The information is centred around three animal groups.

1 Calf	Quality Docility Incidence of scour Incidence of pneumonia	2 Dam	Docility Milking ability	3 Bull	Docility Functionality (feet and legs)
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Information can be recorded on the ICBF website but the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will also provide an online facility or it can be completed on paper.