Teagasc Advisory Newsletter

BEEF

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Beef Data and Genomics Programme

Payments will be made on a per hectare basis in the mew Programme.

The Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) launched last month will, in the short term, provide some much-needed income on suckler farms, with essentially €95 each for the first 10 cows and €80 for each eligible cow thereafter. Payments have to be made on a per hectare basis at €142.50 each for the first 6.66ha and €120/ha on the remaining area up to the maximum payable area (MPA).

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Maximum payable area

The MPA is determined by dividing the number of calved suckler cows in 2014 by 1.5 livestock units (LU). So take, for example, a farmer who had 30ha of forage area and calved 30 cows in 2014: 30 is the reference cow number. When you divide the 30 cows by 1.5, you need 20ha as your MPA. The programme requires that you maintain at least 80% of the MPA. So in the example you would need at least 16ha (20ha x 0.8).

Having second thoughts

One of the areas of concern for people was the fact that the scheme is for six years, and there might be a risk of clawback of monies. So if you are having second thoughts after applying for the programme and are considering pulling out, you can do so, if you withdraw:

- **before payment is issued at the end of the year; or,**
- **before you get notification of an inspection.**

I have applied for the programm: what happens next?

Several weeks after the closing date, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) will issue a mini-statement to each applicant. The mini-statement will indicate your reference cow number based on 2014 numbers. It will also inform you of your MPA and the Eurostar rating of the heifers currently in your herd.

Once you get this information, you should speak with your adviser, particularly about what you might need to do in order to determine what your best strategy will be to ensure that you have adequate heifers in place by 2018 and 2020.

Programme requirements

1 and 2: Calving details and survey

The calving details and survey requirements this year are the same as you would have completed in last year's beef data and genomics scheme. The information can once again be recorded online or on the survey forms issued by the DAFM. Information on calf quality and docility can only be recorded once a calf has reached five months old.

3. Genotyping

This is another contentious aspect of the programme where the requirement has increased from genotyping four animals in a 20-cow herd last year to 12 animals (or 60% of the reference number) in the new Programme each year. The cost of the genotyping, which is not yet finalised, will be deducted directly from the annual payment.

It is expected that tags for the genotyping will not be issued until August/Septmber of 2015 but this will be brought forward considerably in subsequent years as they are likely to become part of the normal animal tags.

The need for the increased percentage of genotyped animals is to help identify enough suitable four- and five-star replacement heifers over the duration of the Programme. For that reason it is likely that it will be the younger animals in the herd that will be targeted for genotyping.

4. Replacement strategy

a) Stock bull: for applicants using a stock bull, at least one stock bull on the holding on June 30, 2019, must have been a genotyped four- or five-star bull on either the terminal or replacement index.

b) At least 80% of the AI used on participating holdings must be from four- or five-star bulls on either the terminal or replacement index – this applies from June 20, 2016.

c) Replacement heifers must be four or five stars

on the replacement index at the time of purchase (for heifers brought into the herd) or at the time of genotyping (for those replacements bred within the herd). The number of heifers/eligible suckler cows meeting these criteria must:

- **on October 31, 2018 = 20% of the number of the applicant's reference animals; and,**
- **on October 31, 2020 = 50% of the number of the applicant's reference animals.**

Heifers on these dates need not be calved but they must be at least 16 months old and born in 2013 or later, and be obviously genotyped four- or five-star.

5. Carbon navigator

A carbon navigator must be completed with an approved adviser by October 31, 2016. The cost of the adviser will be covered by the DAFM. The carbon navigator must be updated annually.

6. Training

You will be required to attend an approved BDGP training course before October 31, 2016. The course will last for four hours and it will explain the Programme in detail. It will also explain how to use the breeding indexes and what efficiencies can be used to improve your carbon footprint. On successful completion of the training you will be eligible to receive a payment of €166.

Apart from the payment, which will be welcomed by participating farms, this is a great opportunity to make real progress in improving the maternal traits in our suckler herd and improve the reliability of the Eurostar index. Many people are sceptical about the index but we are confident that even at this early stage the maternal herd in Grange is showing that four- or five-star animals have more milk, are more fertile and have better calves. We can only build on this.

HEALTH & SAFETY

More children on your farm

Summertime means more children are on farms – with a consequent increased injury risk. In 2014, four childhood deaths occurred on Irish farms. Preventing farm accidents involves spotting and removing hazards to children.

Young children should not have unrestricted access to farmyards so provide a safe play area and accompany them when on the farm. As children grow older they should receive proper instruction and supervision on how to carry out appropriate farm tasks.

Further information on the safety of children and young persons on farms can be sourced at www.hsa.ie.

Provide a safe play area for children.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Steer production: the national picture

E. G. O'Riordan and Paul Cormican of Teagasc Grange have had a look at the 2013 slaughter records.

The national steer slaughter records for 2013, comprising approximately 500,000 records, were examined. Steers from the dairy herd accounted for 55% of the national steer kill. Within this category, steers sired by dairy sire breeds (typically Holstein/Friesian) accounted for 29%, while 17% were sired by early-maturing (typically Aberdeen Angus and Hereford) breeds, and 9% were sired by late-maturing (typically Limousin, Simmental, Charolais, etc.) breeds. Progeny from the suckler herd accounted for approximately 45% of the steer kill in that year.

Within the suckler herd, later-maturing cows (typically Charolais, Limousin, Simmental and their crosses) mated to late-maturing sires accounted for 30% of the national steer kill. Early-maturing sires used on the late-maturing cows accounted for 3% of the steer slaughtered in 2013. Approximately 11% of the steers slaughtered were the progeny of early-maturing suckler cows and within this cow type, steers sired by early- or late-maturing breeds accounted for 4% and 7% of that national kill, respectively.

The age and corresponding carcass weight of steers slaughtered in 2013 is summarised in the table. Mean slaughter age ranged from 28.3 months for dairy x dairy steers to 29.8 months for the dairy x late-maturing animals. Steer carcass weights from the dairy herd showed that progeny sired by early-maturing sires were approximately three weeks older, but 10kg heavier, than dairy x dairy steers. When sired by late-maturing sires, the progeny were approximately three weeks older at slaughter, and 35kg heavier, than steers sired by the early-maturing sires. Progeny from the early-maturing suckler cows, whether sired by early- or late-maturing sires, had a similar age at slaughter, but the late-maturing crosses had carcasses that were 44kg heavier. Within the later-maturing suckler herd, steers sired by late-maturing breeds were one month older, but had carcasses that were 43kg heavier at slaughter than progeny sired by early-maturing sires.

Table 1: Age at slaughter and carcass weight of steers slaughtered in 2013.

	Dairy dams with progeny sired by			Early-maturing suckler dams with progeny sired by		Late-maturing suckler dams with progeny sired by	
	Dairy	Early-maturing	Late-maturing	Early-maturing	Late-maturing	Early-maturing	Late-maturing
Mean age at slaughter (months)	28.3	29.0	29.8	28.9	28.8	28.3	29.3
Mean carcass weight (kg)	325	335	370	341	385	357	400