

Calves ideally should only be grazing swards that are no more than 8-9cm in height.

BEEF

June 2016

Genotyping tags on their way

Many people have been disappointed that the genotype results from 2014 and 2015 were not incorporated into the Eurostar evaluations run that took place last month. We will have to wait until the August run before they are used to update the index.

In the meantime the requirements of the Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) will continue as normal. One of the requirements again this year is that participants in the programme will have to genotype (tag) 60% of their reference number.

Herds in the BDGP that calved last autumn should have received tags in early May for animals that were selected by the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF). These tags should be returned as soon as you are able to get animals in for tagging. For spring calving herds, the ICBF started

to issue letters in late May informing people of what animals have been selected for tagging. There is an online facility on the ICBF website to take off some of the animals selected and replace them. You might want to genotype a replacement heifer that you bought in and take a heifer you had planned to beef off the list. The window to do this in 2016 is short and it is likely that any changes will have to be made by early June. The ICBF will then order the tags by mid June and farmers will begin to receive them from early July. Tags will be released in four batches. Try to return the tags quickly and if one of the selected animals has died or been sold you can contact the ICBF to order a hair card to sample another animal. If you don't receive your tags you should point this out. The ICBF can be contacted on 1850 625 626 if you have any issues.

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Knowledge Transfer Discussion Group programme opens

If you are interested in joining the Knowledge Transfer Discussion Group programme that has replaced the old Beef Technology Adoption Programme (BTAP) then you need to get in touch with your adviser/facilitator, who can sign you up to a group in your area. The closing date for sign up is June 30, 2016.

It is important that you are aware of the terms and conditions of the programme before you sign up because you are committing to the group for three years.

The programme doesn't have the suite of tasks that you had to select under the old BTAP. Instead you will complete a farm improvement plan in Year One and update it in Years Two and Three with your adviser/facilitator.

You will have to attend five group meetings each year or four group meetings and one approved national event.

You must sign up to the ICBF's Herdplus for the three years of the programme.

The farm plan will concentrate on several areas such as:

- animal health plan completed with an approved vet in Year One and updated in Years Two and Three — health plans will focus on calf health, biosecurity and fertility and you will be required to pay for the vet planning fee each year;
- farm health and safety document to be completed in Year One and updated in Years Two and Three;
- e-profit monitor to be completed for each of the three years of the programme;
- grassland management plan completed in Year One for your farm targeting soil fertility, reseeding and grass utilisation; and,
- breeding plan completed in Year One and updated in Years Two and Three using the ICBF website.

In Year One there will be a meeting on farm safety and one meeting with a vet.

You can have a nominee attend meetings for you if they satisfy the criteria laid down.

You can also be in two groups, e.g., beef and sheep. If you are in two groups your payment would be €750 per year for the first group and €375 for the second group. If you are in only one group the payment will be €750 per year provided you satisfy the requirements of the programme

The group year will run from June 1 to May 31 for each year of the programme.

As I said at the beginning there is an onus on you to make yourself familiar with the conditions of the programme before you sign up.



Beef farmers can now join a Beef Knowledge Transfer Group.

Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) training courses

The compulsory training courses for participants in the BDGP scheme are continuing throughout the country. Everyone that is in the scheme must complete one of these four-hour courses before October 31, 2016.

You cannot attend a course until you are sent a written invite to one of them but once invited please make every effort to go as there are only a limited number of courses taking place. Some farmers who could not attend the first course they were invited to are now being invited for a second time. Remember that if you do not complete this course significant penalties will be applied to your BDGP payment.



BDGP participants must notify the Department before June 30 if they intend using a 'rented' bull.

BEEF 2016

This month's newsletter includes a flier outlining what will be on show at BEEF 2016, which is being held in Grange, Dunsany, Co. Meath on July 5. All aspects of beef production will be covered on the day and we would encourage all beef farmers to come early as there will be a

huge amount to see and learn at what will be the single biggest technical beef open day of the year. Apart from Teagasc, all of the other key beef industry stakeholders will be present and we look forward to seeing you and your families at this not to be missed event.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Avoid machine entanglement

Becoming entangled in a rotating machine part is one of the most gruesome farm accidents which can occur. Human flesh and bone is no match for horsepower. The summer months are high risk for entanglement accidents as many machines are used. Machines used in a stationary position with rotating parts, such as slurry tankers or agitators, are the highest risk. Guard all moving parts to the greatest extent possible and turn off the power before approaching a machine with revolving parts.



Entanglement victim shows injury.



Silage production

Edward O'Riordan and Mark McGee of AGRIC, Grange advise on grass silage production for next winter.

Over one million hectares of grassland is used for silage production annually in Ireland and the cost of growing, harvesting, storing and feeding that crop is estimated to be approximately €500 million. As one-quarter to one-third of cattle's lifetime feed intake comes from grass silage, its production cost and feeding value are of major importance on beef farms. Yield (tonne DM/ha) is the main factor influencing production cost of grass silage and the cost, when expressed as €/t DM consumed by livestock, decreases from approximately €300 to €100 as yield increases from 3-8t DM/ha. Correspondingly the cost, when expressed on a net energy basis – €/1,000 UFL – consumed, decreases from €400 to €150. Both soil pH and fertility, and fertiliser nitrogen (N) usage are among the main factors controlling crop yield, but weather conditions and length of time the crop is closed prior to harvest can have a major influence on grass growth and yield, as is evidenced by this year to date. Silage yield (and areas harvested) determine a farm's ability to meet livestock winter feed requirements, while silage nutritive value, often expressed as dry matter digestibility (DMD), and preservation (pH), determine the feeding value of the conserved crop. Sward composition (as in old versus reseeded swards) can influence both crop preservation ease and the final feeding value.

The desired silage feeding value will be influenced by the type of livestock being fed and the targeted animal winter growth rates. Higher DMD well-preserved silages are associated with higher silage intake, and greater live weight and carcass gains, and have better feed conversion efficiencies (kg feed eaten/kg animal gain). Thus in finishing cattle, a 650g/kg DMD grass silage might have an intake of 6.5kg DM/day and achieve live weight gains of approximately 0.4kg/day, whereas silage with a DMD of 750g/kg could have an intake of 9kg DM/day and achieve gains of 0.8kg/day. These translate into carcass gains of 0.3 to 0.5kg/day, respectively.

Well-preserved, higher DMD silage will have a concentrate sparing effect. For example, research data has shown that when comparing silages with 590 and 727g/kg DMD, the carcass gain in finishing steers was approximately 0.35 and 0.65kg/day, respectively.

However, it took a concentrate input of over 2kg/head/day with the lower DMD silage to achieve the same carcass gain as the unsupplemented higher DMD silage. Thus over the next few weeks, when most grass silage is harvested, farmers have an opportunity to select harvest dates that offer an opportunity to produce next winter's silage at a quality to meet their livestock's growth requirement.