

# BEEF

October 2016

## Beef Data and Genomics Programme

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) hopes to begin to process payments for the 2016 Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) in December. It is therefore important that you do your bit to make sure that you fulfil your requirements and become eligible for payment.

There are a few key areas to consider.

- Have you completed a Carbon Navigator? Make sure that your adviser/consultant has completed a Carbon Navigator before October 31 as this is a very important requirement of the Programme in 2016.
- Have you returned all your genotype tags and received confirmation of their receipt?
- Have you completed the BDGP training course?
- For spring-calving herds, have you

been recording the survey information on cow milkability, docility, possible culling reasons, and bull docility and functionality? Once calves reach five months old you can begin to record the calf survey data.

For your own information you should also study your new BDGP report, which was run in mid September. The latest report will include results on the animals that have been genotyped in 2014 and 2015.

Animals that were genotyped during this summer will not be included in this run.

How has the latest evaluation run affected the number of four- or five-star females in your herd? Has there been any movement in your stock bulls' €uroStar values or in the values of the AI sires you have been using?

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## Autumn grazing management

The amount of grass that you will have available for grazing next spring will be strongly influenced by autumn closing date. Research has shown that every week delay in closing from October 2 will reduce spring grass supply by 77kg DM/ha.

From a management perspective start closing the first of your fields/paddocks between October 2 and 10.

Approximately 60-65% of the farm should be closed by November 1, with the entire farm closed by mid November. Teagasc has organised a

number of autumn grassland walks (listed here) to illustrate good autumn management. All walks commence at 11.00am on the following farms:

- Ger Dineen's, Knockroe, Kilnamartyra, Co. Cork – Monday, October 10;
- Billy Gilmore's, Cortoon, Tuam, Co. Galway – Thursday, October 20;
- Heinz Eggert's, Sheplands Farm, Sherlockstown, Sallins, Co. Kildare – Friday, October 21; and,
- Billy Glasheen's, Lismolin, Ballingarry, Co. Tipperary – Tuesday, October 25.

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## Animal health events

Five animal health events have been organised by Teagasc and Animal Health Ireland (AHI), in conjunction with meat processors. All events will be DAFM-approved national events for knowledge transfer (KT) groups. Each event will target four key areas: Beef Health Check Reports; Parasite Control at Housing; Antibiotic Resistance; and, Respiratory Disease.

The events will take place across the country and the details are as follows:

- Jonathon and Derek Weir, Ballindrait, Lifford, Co. Donegal, at 11.00am on Friday, October 7;
- Pallaskenry Agricultural College, Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick, at 12.00pm on Tuesday, October 11;
- Mark Synes, Ballyhaste, Gorey, Co. Wexford, at 12.00pm on Wednesday, October 12;
- Kepak Farm, Clonee, Co. Meath, at 12.00pm on Thursday, October 13; and,
- Brendan and Gerard Walsh, Carraroe, Brownsgrrove, Tuam, Co. Galway, at 2.00pm on Tuesday, October 18.

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## Adverse weather

For those who have been suffering from the persistent rain and poor ground conditions, the thought of closing fields in rotation is merely wishful thinking. Stock may already be housed much earlier than normal. This will put winter feed supplies under pressure. It is important, if you think that you will be short of silage this winter, that you act now.

There are some things you need to do:

1. Assess the quantity and quality of fodder available. Delayed cutting dates on farms will leave quality below what you would normally like.
  2. Calculate your winter feed requirements. What type and numbers of stock are you going to carry through the winter? Will you have a surplus or deficit of fodder available?
  3. Decide on the options you have available. If you have more than 50% of your silage requirements on hand then there are options. Buying extra silage/hay or straw may not necessarily be the best option unless they are good value. Cereals and rations are competitively priced this year.
  4. If cash flow is going to be under pressure, act promptly in dealing with banks/merchants.
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## RESEARCH UPDATE

## Dairy-to-beef and finishing techniques

Robert Prendiville and Brendan Swan of Teagasc Grange and Johnstown Castle advise on optimum early-maturing dairy calf-to-beef systems.

Current industry figures show that approximately 30% (circa 340,000) of dairy calves (Friesian (FR)) born are replacement heifers for the dairy herd (Animal Identification and Movement (AIM), 2016). Aside from the calves that are exported the remaining calves (approximately 840,000 calves) are available for beef production. In general, male dairy calves are managed under bull or steer systems, while beef crossbred heifer calves are either operated in low input production systems or retained for breeding in the suckler herd. Currently, male dairy calves represent 41% of dairy calves available for beef production (**Figure 1**), while 43% are early maturing crossbred calves (26% Aberdeen Angus (AA) and 17% Hereford (HE), respectively). Limousin (LM), Belgian Blue (BB) and other crossbred calves make up the remainder (approximately 95,000 calves). The purpose of this article is to present the optimum production systems for early maturing dairy beef crossbred calves.

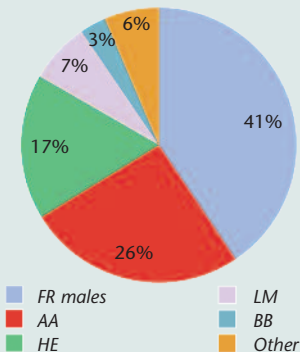


Figure 1: Sire breed profile of dairy calves available for beef production (AIM, 2016).

### Update from the research at Johnstown Castle

Research at Johnstown Castle examined various finishing strategies for early and late spring-born Angus and Hereford dairy crossbred heifers and steers (**Table 1**). Animals were either finished at pasture or indoors during their second winter. Results from Johnstown Castle have shown that spring-born early-maturing dairy crossbred heifers (February to April born) should be slaughtered before the second winter housing from 19 to 21 months of age (September to November). Finishing heifers indoors during their second winter resulted in a greater carcass weight, but winter finishing costs were inevitably incurred and some heifers were over fat at slaughter. An economical appraisal of that system highlighted that finishing heifers indoors was less profitable than finishing heifers at pasture. The blueprint for the early-maturing heifer system is outlined later.

Early spring-born (January and February), early-maturing steers have the potential to be slaughtered at the end of the second grazing season. Previously, the blueprint for these steers involved a winter finishing period of 80 days. While both systems were profitable, finishing steers during the second winter was less profitable than pasture finishing. Alternative finishing strategies were also investigated for late-born steers. Animals were either finished indoors during the second winter or finished during their third season at pasture at 28 months of age. Results showed that steers that were finished indoors had



a lighter carcass weight and that the system was less profitable than finishing animals during their third season at pasture.

The optimum production systems for early-maturing heifers and early- and late-born, early-maturing steers are outlined below. In all of the systems animals were allocated 2.5kg of concentrates per head daily for 60 days pre slaughter.

### Early-maturing heifer production system

After their first winter, heifers were turned out to pasture in early March and slaughtered off pasture at the end of the second grazing season between September and November (19 to 21 months of age). Target carcass weight for this system is 235-250kg. Carcass conformation for heifer production systems were predominately O=/O+, with carcass fat classes of 3-/=. Results from Johnstown Castle have shown that all spring-born heifers should be slaughtered before the second winter.

### February-born steer

Steers were at pasture for the first grazing season and 'stored' during the first winter on grass silage

*ad libitum*, supplemented with 1.5-2.0kg of concentrate daily depending on silage quality. They were turned out to pasture for the second grazing season and slaughtered off pasture in November. Average daily gain during the second season at pasture is 0.8kg. The target carcass weight in this system is 280kg. Average carcass conformation score was O= and carcass fat score was 3-.

### April-born steer

Animals were at pasture for the second grazing season and were then housed and offered grass silage only on an *ad libitum* basis for the second winter. During this housing period average daily gain (ADG) is typically 0.50kg. Steers are then turned out to pasture in March and slaughtered in June. ADG during the third season at pasture is 1.3kg.

The target carcass weight is 320kg, with conformation and fat scores of O+ and 3+, respectively. This system is particularly well suited to calves born in late spring (April/May), as winter finishing is avoided and a heavier carcass weight is achieved under grazing conditions.

**Table 1: Three years of animal performance results of early-maturing dairy crossbred heifers and steers.**

Month of birth Slaughter age (mo)	February born		April born		February born		April born	
	19	21	19	21	21	23	21	26
Finish	Pasture	Pasture	Pasture	Indoor	Pasture	Indoor	Indoor	Pasture
Live weight at slaughter (kg)	450	476	446	518	525	607	547	621
Carcass weight (kg)	234	247	234	257	274	308	269	322
Conformation score	O=	O+	O+	O+	O=	O+	O+	O+
Fat score	3-	3=	3-	4-	3+	3+	3+	3+
Kill out proportion (g/kg)	520	518	525	496	521	507	491	519