

BEEF

September 2016

Grass check

Have you managed to extend your rotation length?

Grazing rotation length should be extended to 35 days by mid September. The reasons for doing this are to allow for extra days at grass in the autumn/winter, while also ensuring that paddocks can be closed in rotation from October to allow for early spring grazing. By extending the rotation length in autumn, we are 'pushing' out the growth curve and building a bank of grass for the autumn.

So if we are looking at a 35-day rotation, no more than one-fifth of the farm should be grazed each week.

If you are going around faster than this, what can you do to slow things down? All silage ground should be back in for grazing. If there is remaining

fertiliser in the budget, spread 30 units of nitrogen (N) (with phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) if soil tests allow) as soon as possible and before the nitrates spreading deadline (September 15). Consider selling stock earlier or supplementing with meal at grass to reduce demand. Weaning calves and creep feeding will also reduce demand.

What about lime?

While lime can be spread at any time of year, autumn provides a great opportunity for spreading. High annual rainfall leads to a large removal of lime each year. Because of this soils have a maintenance requirement of 2.5-5t of lime/ha every five years. Applying lime at that rate would cost €25/ha/year but would yield an extra one tonne of grass

Edited by
Karen Dukelow,
Cattle Specialist

In this issue

- Grass check
- Herd check
- BDGP reminder
- Tidying up to prevent accidents

DM/ha worth €181/ha/year. At farm level, every €100 spent on lime returns €700 in extra grass production.

Have you used a post-emergence spray on new reseeded?

Applying a herbicide to a new grass ley is the most cost-effective spray you will use on that field. Control of docks, thistles and chickweed, etc., is much easier when these weeds are seedlings.

Product choice is decided by the presence or absence of clover in the new ley. Clover-safe products include Legumex DB, Undersown DB Plus, Clovex, Triad and Underclear. Starane 2, Binder, Hurler and Reaper are not clover safe. Remember straight versions of CMPP (Duplosan, Optica, etc.) and MCPA are no longer registered for use on grass.

Do I need to spray my new 'clean' reseed?

- Yes (in most cases) as there are up to 100,000 dock seeds per acre ready to germinate in fields.

- Yes as you will kill all weeds more easily when they are seedlings.
- Yes as you will maximise your investment. Teagasc research shows that reseed sprays provide very good control of docks for four years after application, whereas mature sprays provide control for just one year (Figure 1).

Help the spray work:

- have an even, vigorously growing sward;
- apply the herbicide onto small, actively growing weeds (e.g., dock leaf = size of €2 coin);
- spray six to eight weeks after reseeding when there are three leaves on the grass and one true leaf on the clover;
- avoid spraying in very dry or cold conditions (talk to your adviser/merchant if this is the case);
- keep water rates high: 220-350L/ha (20-30 gallons per acre); and,
- remember to keep the prescribed cross-compliance records and follow the product label.

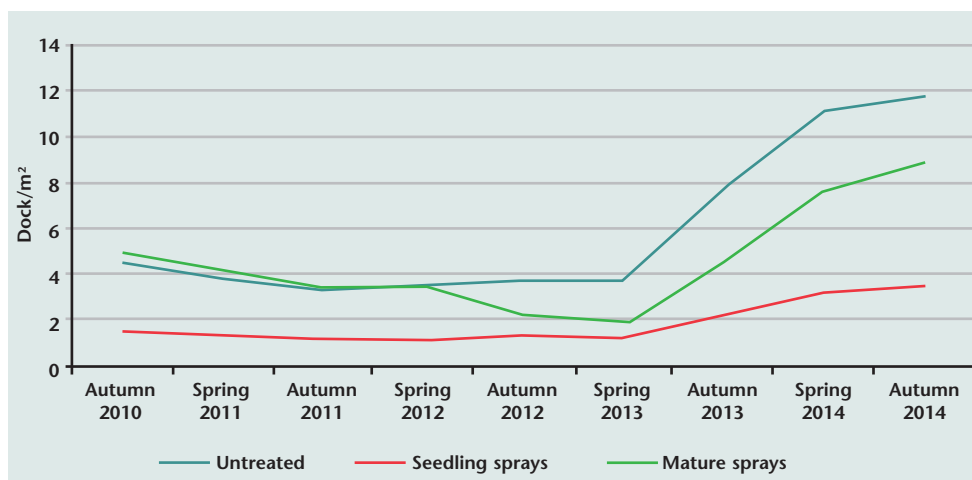


Figure 1: Teagasc grass reseed trials. Effect of dock herbicides applied onto seedling or mature docks.

Herd check

Take a good hard look at your suckler cows. Which cows are costing you money and which cows are costing you the most money? The first category is dead cows (€1,300+). It's easy to forget these but better to avoid deaths and cull old cows or cows not fit for the system. A dead cow costs money due to the obvious loss through cull value and cost of disposal. But what about a lost calf if in calf and reduced calf performance if calf at foot?

The next in terms of cost are barren, empty or 'recycled' cows. Call them what you like, they are costing at least €700/head. Most of this cost is the loss of sale of a weaned calf. It does not cover costs that are likely to occur due to them getting too fat, having calving difficulties, or failing to get in calf again. If you haven't scanned already, scan now and make plans for their departure. The next cows to cull are late-

calving cows. These are costing over €300 each. This cost is mostly coming from the cost of a lighter weanling, so this group of cows should also include any cows producing light/poor weanlings (check against replacement index value).

Having a good replacement strategy, either by breeding plenty of your own with a high replacement value or buying in high replacement value heifers needs to be planned. When buying replacements or any stock you risk the introduction of disease into your herd. The risks increase with the number of animals bought and the number of herds from which they come. Animal Health Ireland (AHI) has detailed how you can reduce these risks through seven simple steps. Further details can be found on their website – www.animalhealthireland.ie.



HEALTH & SAFETY

Tidy up and secure loads before winter

Slips, trips and falls are the cause of the highest level of non-fatal farm accidents. These lead to serious accidents, disability and death. The principal causes are untidy workplaces and rushing. September is an opportune month to tidy up walkways and secure loads before the winter season sets in. As there is a seven times higher risk of death from a fall at height than at ground level, particular precautions are needed here. A newly released FBD-sponsored booklet 'Build in Safety – An Advisory Booklet for Farmers', and a leaflet explaining the health and safety training requirements for the targeted

agricultural modernisation schemes (TAMS) will be available at the Teagasc exhibit at the National Ploughing Championships and in Teagasc offices.



Tidiness and safety.

BDGP reminder

All farmers in the Beef Data Genomics Programme (BDGP) must complete a four-hour training course by October 31, 2016.

They must also complete a Carbon Navigator with a Teagasc adviser or agricultural consultant by October 31, 2016.



RESEARCH UPDATE

Extending rotation and measuring performance

Adam Woods of AGRIC, Teagasc Grange reports on building grass covers, cattle performance and a busy calving period ahead at the Teagasc/Dawn Meats Newford Farm.

Here in Newford our thoughts are turning to building grass covers for the autumn and we spread our last round of nitrogen (N) on August 24 where two-thirds of the farm received 20 units N/acre. We are currently growing 50-60kg DM/ha/day and our days ahead has risen to 25 days. With second cut silage fields back in the rotation our daily demand has dropped to 45kg DM/ha/day. We have also started to feed two-thirds (60) of the yearling cattle at grass a ration of 5kg/head/day and this will also reduce demand. Our ration is a simple barley-based ration.

These are cattle which have been selected to slaughter off grass in the next two months. Steers were weighed on July 27 and on average weighed 514kg and gained 1.01kg/day since turnout. Heifers were 475kg and gained 0.85kg/day since turnout. This year's calves have been performing well with

male calves weighing 215kg and gaining 1.32kg/day since birth and heifer calves weighing 197kg and gaining 1.19kg/day since birth. Average cow weight in July was 560kg and cows were condition score 2.5 in July. Male calves were castrated on August 11. Calves will receive their pneumonia vaccines prior to weaning in October and housing in November. Our scanning went well with 86 out of 88 cows in calf and 23 out of 25 heifers in calf after 11 weeks of breeding. Calving will be compact with 80 cows/heifers to calve in the first four weeks of the 2017 calving season. We have reseeded 15 acres this year with more reseeding planned for next year. We have hosted many groups over the summer months and if anybody wishes to visit contact Matthew Murphy, Farm Manager at Teagasc, Athenry, tel: 091-084 5200, or Michael Fagan, Teagasc, Grange, tel: 046-906 1100.