

BEEF

September 2017

Beef events

This month we have two Grass10 events (**Table 1**), where the theme is 'grow more, graze more, earn more'.



Table 1: Grass10 events in September.

When:	Time:	Event:
Thursday, September 7	6.00pm	Michael Mellett, Mochara, Shrule, Co. Mayo
Wednesday, September 13	11.00am	Derrypatrick Herd, Teagasc Grange, Dunsany, Co. Meath

Topics covered will include:

- building up grass for the autumn;
- improving soil fertility; and,
- improving grazing infrastructure.

Green Acres Calf to Beef event

An open day will take place on the Teagasc Green Acres Calf to Beef Programme farm of Michael Ryan in Ballymore, Co. Westmeath on Wednesday, October 4. Michael works full-time off farm and has put in place a system for rearing Angus and Hereford heifers through to beef at 19-20 months. More details on this open day will be available closer to the date.

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Profit monitor trends

Last month we printed our drystock profit booklet, which details the results from 2016. Copies are available at your local Teagasc office if you want to get one. With all the urgency of knowledge transfer deadlines to get your profit monitor completed, once you give in your data you might think: "At least that's it for another year". That might well be how you feel, but after handing over the data you should take the time to go through the results. You are guaranteed to learn something and it might help you to hone in on an area that needs attention, whether it is looking at output, reining in costs, or

improving animal performance. Year on year we see that top performing farms (**Table 2**) have a number of characteristics in common. They achieve good individual animal performance, good levels of output, good price per kg, are well stocked, are able to dilute their costs and can generate a net profit before premia.

Any improvement in output needs to start with achieving good output on an individual animal basis. Make sure you are achieving good levels of output on a per LU basis before you contemplate pushing stocking rate.

Table 2: 2016 profit monitor analysis – top one-third of producers per production system.

System	Liveweight produced kg/LU	Stocking rate LU/ha	Gross output value €/ha	Variable costs as a percentage of output	Net profit (excl premia) €/ha
Sucker to beef	380	2.3	€2,035	42%	€563
Suckler to weanling/store	328	1.92	€1,412	43%	€258
Non breeding	446	2.22	€2,035	45%	€522

Soil fertility

As you can see from our beef events section, we have two Grass10 walks coming up this month. One major component of these walks will be addressing the whole area of soil fertility, which is the starting point in growing more grass. As we move into the autumn, you should consider the following:

- when and what areas do you need to take fresh soil samples from?
- What areas need lime and can you apply it before next spring?
- Completing your 2017 fertiliser records, so you can get a 2018 fertiliser plan drawn up.



Good soil fertility is essential to growing more grass.

Carbon navigator for BDGP

If you are in the Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP), you are required to update your carbon navigator each year. If you do not complete this before November 1, your BDGP payment will be hit by a 20% penalty. There are basically two ways in which you can submit the data required.



November 1 is the carbon navigator deadline for the BDGP.

- 1) If you are registered on the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation's (ICBF) Herdplus, go into the BDGP section and click on the carbon navigator tab. Complete and save the data online and that will meet the requirements of the programme; **or**,
- 2) a paper version will have been posted to you by ICBF. Once you receive it, you should fill out the sheet and post it back before November 1. There are three main areas of information being requested, covering the period from January 1 to December 31, 2016: the length of the grazing season; nitrogen efficiency (nitrogen usage); and, slurry management.



RESEARCH UPDATE

Is white clover beneficial?

John Heslin, Research Officer at Teagasc Grange looks at whether white clover is beneficial in beef production.

The inclusion of white clover into perennial ryegrass swards has been reported to increase herbage production and quality. Previous research in Grange has shown an increase in liveweight and carcass weight per animal, when steers grazed perennial ryegrass and white clover swards, in comparison to perennial ryegrass only swards. White clover has the ability to 'fix' atmospheric nitrogen (N) through the rhizobia bacteria located in the root nodules of the plant. This can supply 50-150kg N/ha/year. However, despite the potential benefits white clover has to offer, the incorporation of it on beef farm pastures has been slow. This limited uptake of white clover and its presence in pastures may be a result of associated issues with white clover in perennial ryegrass swards, such as: poor soil fertility; the seasonality of clover; the change in grassland

management required to establish and maintain clover; and, the possibility of bloat in animals. To characterise the effects of including white clover in perennial ryegrass swards for beef systems, the decision was made to include clover in the pastures of the Derrypatrick Herd in Grange, which is composed of a 100-cow suckler-to-beef system.

Layout of experiment

The farm (65ha) is divided into 68 paddocks and these are grouped into blocks of four. Within each block of four, clover was randomly assigned to two. As a result, 34 paddocks contain a perennial ryegrass/white clover mix and the remaining 34 paddocks are perennial ryegrass only. Within each block of paddocks, the clover paddocks have been sown with one

of two varieties at random, i.e., aberherald and chieftain. Fertiliser input (200kg N/ha/year) and stocking rate (2.8LU/ha) will be the same across all paddocks. Progeny will be slaughtered as steers and heifers at a constant age. The aim of this systems research is to: measure beef production from grass/clover swards; and, measure dry matter production from grass/clover swards. Clover incorporation began on May 29, 2017 and has since been completed following the harvest of second-cut silage on July 20. Clover was over-sown using a pneumatic seeder at a rate of 5kg/ha (2kg/acre). Following sowing, fertiliser in the form of 0:7:30 was applied at a rate of two bags/acre. The reason for choosing this fertiliser, containing no nitrogen, was to reduce the possibility of

excessive grass growth that might over-shadow the clover seed and inhibit its establishment. The success of clover establishment will be measured throughout this autumn and where establishment is poor, additional clover will be sown. While clover studies have been previously carried out with beef cattle, this is the first suckler-beef system research to be carried out in Ireland investigating the inclusion of clover and the potential it has on performance. Weekly updates of the progression of this project and other work with the Derrypatrick herd are available on the Teagasc website at the following link:

<https://www.teagasc.ie/animals/beef/demonstration-farms/derrypatrick-herd/management-updates/>.

+ HEALTH & SAFETY

Coping with stress

The Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) has produced an excellent leaflet called 'Let's talk: dealing with stress'. The leaflet is available at <https://www.ifa.ie/cross-sectors/farm-family/mental-health/>. The leaflet describes the nature of stress, outlines causes and signs of stress, and gives strategies for coping with it. Most importantly, the leaflet gives useful contacts and support services. If you are feeling suicidal, or are concerned about a family member or friend, contact the IFA/Pieta House 'Mind our farm families' phone line on 1890 130 022



(Monday-Friday 9.00am-6.00pm and Saturday 10.00am-2.00pm). The Samaritans can also be contacted at www.samaritans.org or on their 24-hour/365 days a year helpline number: 116 123.