



BEEF

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BDGP four- and five-star female requirement

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For those of you participating in the Beef Data Genomics Programme (BDGP), there is a requirement that a percentage of your heifers/eligible suckler cows be genotyped females that are:

- four or five stars on the replacement index (on a within-breed or on a cross-breed basis) at the time of purchase (for heifers brought into the herd) or at the time of genotyping (for those replacements bred within the herd) – where a non-genotyped replacement heifer is purchased, this animal must be subsequently genotyped and confirmed four or five stars on the replacement index (on a

within- or an across-breed basis) before being deemed eligible for the Programme;

- at least 16 months old; and,
- born in 2013 or later.

The number of heifers/eligible suckler cows meeting these requirements on each holding on October 31, 2018 must be equivalent to 20% of the number of your reference animals.

So if you have a reference number of 20, you will need to have at least four heifers/eligible cows in place.

Heifers must be at least 16 months old on October 31, but they do not have to be in calf on that date.

In order to check what position

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your herd is in regarding four- and five-star females, the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) will issue a BDGP eligibility report this month based on the latest evaluation run. This will give you some idea if you are on target to meet the requirements come October.

Further evaluation runs will happen in May and September and you need to keep a close eye on these. New genomic evaluations, sale of stock and culling of cows will all lead to continual changes in eligible animals available.

If you anticipate that you are going to find it

difficult to meet the 20% requirement, you need to look at your 2017-born weanling heifers that you could possibly genotype and that will be 16 months old by October.

Pick those that are possibly showing the potential to be four or five stars but are not currently genotyped. The ICBF is likely to contact you in February indicating which animals will be genotyped in 2018, and you will be given the opportunity to nominate different animals if you wish.

The other option of course is that you may have to buy animals that are already genotyped four or five star.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Manage workload

Workload rises from January onwards in Irish grass-based farming. Farm accidents in spring are often associated with doing work in a hurry and not concentrating on the job in hand. Work planning is key to safe work. At the start of each week, consciously plan and prioritise your essential work tasks. Postpone non-urgent tasks until a later date. Work planning prevents fatigue from setting in as the spring progresses. There is a lot of walking around farms in spring, so keep walkways clear of trip hazards. Work at a steady pace.



Speed kills.



BETTER FARM UPDATE

Tightening up to expand

Maurice Hearne from Co. Waterford is addressing problems on his farm in preparation for an increase in calving from this year on.

Maurice is running 85 autumn-calving suckler cows on 60ha near Dunmore East in Waterford. Autumn calving went well in 2017.

Calving lasted just over 11 weeks, with mortality after 28 days at 3.5% and he ended up with 85 live calves. Due to previous issues with pneumonia in calves, a thorough herd health plan was drawn up last summer.

The plan included modifications to existing housing to improve ventilation, as well as the introduction of a strict vaccination policy, which included IBR and pasteurilla. Last year, tillage ground was converted back into grassland, so in order to keep stocking rates up, 40 maiden heifers were bought in and bred with the aim of calving down 100 cows a year from 2018.

The majority of heifers bought were Simmentals and Limousins from British Friesian cows.

Seven weeks of breeding was carried out, four using AI and then three weeks with a Limousin stock bull.

The cows are housed now since November and are running in three separate groups. AI is being used on a group of the best cows on farm, with high-index predominately Simmental bulls being used with the view to breeding replacements. Charolais stock bulls are being used to

breed with the remaining cows. To keep the calving spread tight, cows and calves are being separated and suckled twice daily to break the maternal bond to try and aid cows coming back into heat. Cows are currently on a total mixed ration (TMR) consisting of 73 DMD second cut silage, 5kg of fodder beet, 1.25kg of home grown crimped barley and 0.5kg of a 23% protein balancer with minerals.

A total of 54 predominantly home-bred bulls are currently being finished under 16 months. Bulls were weighed on November 17 and they averaged 628kg at just over fourteen months. These bulls are currently on an 11.5kg ration, which is made up 70:30 of crimped barley and a protein balancer. The ration bulls are also being given 5kg of fodder beet, 1kg of straw, and silage *ad lib*. The plan is to purchase a group of bulls for finishing when all of the current group of bulls are slaughtered. Last autumn to further increase the grassland stocking rate and output, 21 Simmental-bred calves from dairy cows were reared. Since arriving on the farm, the calves have done a respectable 0.67kg of daily gain. They are currently on *ad lib* silage and 2kg of a 17% protein barley, oats and soya bean meal ration. The aim will be to turn these calves out as early as possible in the spring.



Anthelmintic resistance on dairy calf to beef farms

Anne Kelleher, Barbara Good and Orla Keane of AGRIC, Teagasc, Grange, Dunsany, Co. Meath undertook research to discover the extent of anthelmintic resistance on Irish beef farms.



Researchers examined the extent of anthelmintic resistance on 16 dairy calf to beef farms.

Irish beef production is predominantly pasture-based, with grazing calves naturally exposed to gut worms. Gut worm infection can cause ill-thrift and good worm control is highly dependent on effective worming products.

However, a direct and unavoidable result of the continuous use of wormers is the development of drug-resistant worms. These are worms that can survive a dose of the wormer that would normally kill them. The main gut worm species which infect cattle in Ireland are *Ostertagia* and *Cooperia*.

Ostertagia is the main genus associated with disease, while the less pathogenic *Cooperia* is the main contributor to faecal egg counts.

Disease may also be more common in the second half of the grazing season due to the build-up of larvae on pasture over time.

There are currently three classes of anthelmintics available for the treatment of gut worms in cattle, benzimidazoles (white

drenches), levamisoles (yellow drenches) and macrocyclic lactones (clear drenches).

Anthelmintic resistance to all three classes of drugs has recently been found on Irish sheep farms; however, the extent of resistance on cattle farms was unknown.

We therefore tested for resistance to benzimidazole (fenbendazole, oral) and macrocyclic lactone (ivermectin, injectable) on 16 dairy calf to beef farms using the faecal egg count reduction test.

A fully effective anthelmintic dose reduces egg count to zero after administration. If the egg count reduction is less than 95%, then anthelmintic resistance is present. On all 16 farms, the ivermectin treatment failed to reduce the egg count by >95%. On 12 farms, fenbendazole failed to reduce the egg count by >95%, while on the remaining four farms fenbendazole was effective. This indicates that anthelmintic resistance may be common on Irish cattle farms.