

# BEEF

September 2018

## Four weeks to spread nitrogen

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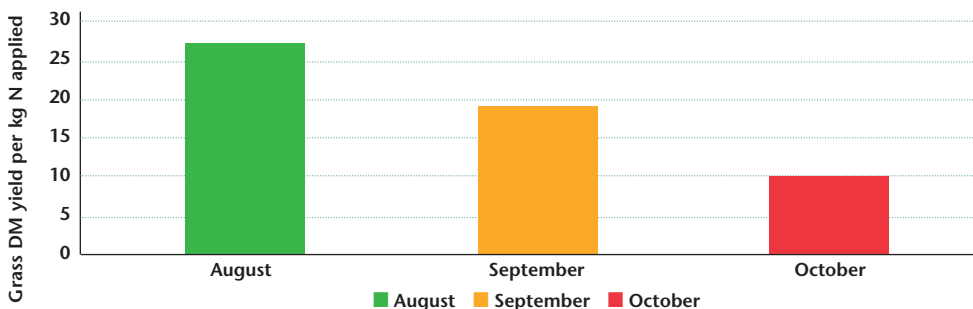
Nitrogen (N) fertiliser strategy is one of the most important management factors influencing the supply of grass available in autumn. While responses to N fertiliser application are moderate, the cost and availability of other feeds makes it more attractive now.

Furthermore, an extension of the deadline for spreading fertiliser

has been granted by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Michael Creed TD recently. The deadline has been extended for chemical fertiliser from mid September to the end of September. This will provide an opportunity to maximise the grass growing season. The average response to every kg of N applied during early August, early September and early October is outlined in Figure 1. About 30kg N/ha (24 units N/acre) was applied to test response levels. The response was highest to early August application at 27kg grass DM/kg N and October recorded the lowest response at 10kg DM/kg N. But what does this mean in terms of economics?

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30kg N/ha applied at the start of each month. Wall, D.P. & Fox, I, 2018

FIGURE 1: Grass dry matter yield response to fertiliser N

The value of autumn grass is about 11c/kg DM (from Pasture Profit Index model). The average cost of a kg of N (CAN) is about €1. Therefore quick maths will tell you that breakeven is about a response of 9-10kg of grass DM per kg of N applied. This is similar to the response achieved in early October.

However, the cost and availability of feeds other than grass now make N fertiliser application

more economic because the value of autumn grass will rise a lot closer to 15-20c/kg grass DM than the standard 11c/kg grass DM. In addition, soil temperatures are about 3°C higher than normal at the moment, which should increase response rates provided the fertiliser gets an opportunity to work (i.e., rain to 'wash it into' the soil). The best economic responses will be achieved on silage ground and on reseeded land.

## Winter feed situation

There has been a serious divide across the country this year in grass growth figures, with southern and eastern counties suffering due to the prolonged lack of moisture. The consequence is that many farms are facing into the winter with winter feed deficits. The important thing is to realise where you stand. At this stage you should:

- complete a fodder budget;
- assess winter feed supply available;
- once you have 50% of the silage requirements on the farm, there are options; and,
- determine what actions you need to take.

Possible options:

- test silage on your farm – know your dry matter digestibility (DMD) and dry matter;
- take advantage of the fertiliser and slurry deadline extension to maximise grass growth;
- can you take a second/third silage cut on your own ground/short-term conacre?; and,
- reduce winter demand:
  - scan cows early/cull empties;
  - push finishing cattle on *ad lib* meals; and,
  - sell weanlings/stores.

## Beef Data and Genomics Programme

Any of you currently in the Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) need to keep an eye on several things over the next few months in order to qualify for your payment in December.

### Carbon navigator requirement

In the last few weeks you will have received a letter from the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). The letter contains advice on how to complete the 2017 Carbon Navigator. It can be completed on paper or you have the option of doing it online through HerdPlus on ICBF.com.

The information required is quite straightforward and pertains to the 2017 calendar year and falls into three distinct sections:

1. Length of grazing season – turnout and housing dates for suckler cows and yearlings or an indication if stock were outwintered.
2. Nitrogen usage – record the tonnage of CAN equivalents used, total urea used and the total tonnage of concentrate used.
3. Slurry and farmyard manure management – record the percentage of slurry and farmyard manure (FYM) spread in spring/summer and autumn and the method of application.

Once completed either post back the form or complete it online no later than September 30, 2018.

### 20% Four- and Five-Star female requirement

One of the requirements in the BDGP in 2018 is that on October 31, 2018, you must have 20% of your reference number genotyped as four- and five-star females on the replacement index in your herd. ICBF will issue the results of their latest evaluation run early this month, which should include any females genotyped up to June 30. If you examine an updated eligibility report from the ICBF it will indicate whether your herd meets the 20% requirement on that date. If you do not have females in your herd that could potentially become eligible once genotyped, your only alternative option is to purchase females.

Females must be at least 16 months old on October 31, 2018 to be deemed eligible. Females purchased into the herd for the purposes of eligibility, must be born on/after January 1, 2013. The DAFM estimates that several hundred herds could potentially be short on eligible females. If you are unsure as to what the best course of action is for your herd, you are advised to discuss your herd's situation with your adviser.



## HEALTH & SAFETY

### Protect your back and joints

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) affect 56% of Irish farmers each year. The most commonly experienced MSDs are back (37%), shoulder/neck (25%), knee (9%), hand/wrist/elbow (9%), ankle/foot (9%), and hip (8%). MSDs are a major

source of long-term disability among farmers.

Prevent MSDs by avoiding heavy lifting, pulling or pushing, which lead to musculoskeletal wear. Maintain a tidy farm. Assess loads carefully before lifting and use a safe lifting technique.



## BETTER FARM UPDATE



### Extreme conditions

It was a year of difficulty for Irish farmers and one Carlow farmer told Teagasc how he is dealing with the fodder shortage.

Summer 2018 will live long in the memory for Tom Bolger, who operates a 45-cow suckler to steer finish and dairy calf to beef system on the outskirts of Borris, Co. Carlow. To say the conditions experienced over the past few months were difficult would be an understatement. The dry period since the end of May coupled with the extreme weather conditions experienced earlier this spring have meant grass growth for the farm is well below where it would normally be. So far this year the farm has just shy of six tonnes of grass grown.

#### Fodder situation

First-cut silage was taken May 23, and yielded quiet well. All ground was subsequently fertilised with over 80 units of N, with the aim of taking a

good second cut to build fodder reserves.

However, with the continued dry spell there was little or no growth and the decision was made to graze it and once it was grazed the opportunity to take it up again never arose. To date just over 65% of the farm's fodder requirement is in the yard, with a slim possibility of getting any more from inside the farm gate. To make up the shortfall, Tom took a proactive approach earlier this summer by purchasing 200 tonnes of maize silage. The maize silage will come at a significant cost to the system, but it gives peace of mind that there will be enough feed for stock regardless of what happens next spring.

A BETTER Beef farm event on fodder and finance will take place on the farm on September 6 at 2.00pm.

## Upcoming events

### Teagasc/Farmers Journal Better Farm events

Date	Venue	Time
September 4	John McSweeney, Gurraneigh, Lissarda, Co. Cork P14 P593	4.00pm-6.00pm
September 6	Tom Bolger, Clooneygoose, Borris, Co. Carlow R95 KV80	2.00pm-4.00pm
September 11	Sean Hayes, Lisduff, Co. Clare V95 W280	4.00pm-6.00pm
September 13	Martin O'Hare, Little Ash, Knockbridge, Co. Louth A91 RP48	2.00pm-4.00pm

### Teagasc /Bord Bia Origin Green Quality Assurance events

September 12	Jim Parkinson, Marlhill, New Inn, Cashel, Co. Tipperary
September 26	Michael Hartnett, Ballymonis, Whitegate, Co. Cork,
September 28	William Morrow, Raphoe, Co. Donegal
October 3	Ronan Delaney, Gaulstown Hse., Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath