

BEEF

November 2018

Don't graze spring grass now



Don't be tempted to graze paddocks that were closed in October.

About two-thirds of the grass grazed in spring (February/March) is grass that grew during October/early November. Therefore, it is essential that the fields/paddocks closed during October are not grazed in November. Despite above average soil temperatures, don't be tempted to go back and graze closed fields, even if grass growth remains strong. What is grazed now won't be available in the spring.

Remember, every day the animal is at grass next spring is worth about €3/LU/day (given anticipated feed prices). Autumn grass is worth a lot

less. The priority now is to close the farm. Every one week delay in closing will cost your farm 80-100kg of grass dry matter per hectare in spring. The target was to have a minimum of 50% of the farm closed by November 1. Paddocks you closed up during October should remain closed and not be grazed again in November. Block grazing and back fencing are useful tools to help get the grazing job completed on your remaining fields. Using a strip wire and moving animals once a day will improve the level of grass utilised and achieve greater clean out of these paddocks.

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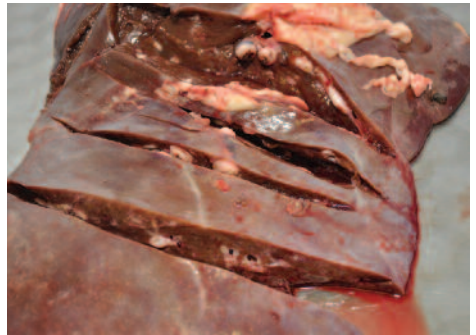
Effective fluke control

Fluke are one of the most common internal parasites found in cattle. There are a huge number of products effective at killing them, farmers are aware of the parasites for decades and most treat their cattle at housing for them. However, every year we still see a high percentage of livers in meat processing factories from housed cattle that have live adult liver fluke in them. Why is this? There are a number of possible reasons, including:

- using a control product that only kills a proportion of the fluke in the animal;
- underestimating the weight of the animal and not giving enough product;
- incorrect treatment procedure; and,
- using a product that the fluke are resistant to.

When purchasing a product to kill liver fluke, the most important question to ask is: "When should I use this product so that it is most effective"? Most of the flukicides that are for sale only control older immature liver flukes and/or adult fluke. This means that any fluke that have been picked up over the previous six

to eight weeks or so will not be killed. A second treatment for fluke will then be necessary. Triclabendazole-based products will kill much younger fluke, but Animal Health Ireland reports that resistance to them appears quite widespread in Ireland. To be sure that a fluke control programme has actually worked, it is a good idea to send off dung samples for testing eight weeks after you have given the last treatment. Only then will you know for certain whether or not it has been effective.



Live liver fluke are showing up in treated cattle. Why?

Group cows by body condition

There is much debate about the cost of keeping the suckler cow. A total of 75% of her variable costs are for feed. Any savings that can be made here can therefore be substantial. Cows should be in peak body condition at this time of the year, as they come in off grass and especially after the good back end on most farms. Many will have a body condition score (BCS) of between 3 and 4 (on the 1 to 5 scale) and could afford to lose condition between now and calving (when they should have a score of around 2.5). Fitter cows at calving are also less likely to have a

difficult calving. Where 0.75 of a score is lost, it means in reality losing 50-60kg of liveweight from housing to calving. In feed terms this equates to 210kg barley or up to 1.5 tons of a 67% DMD silage (worth €40-€50 per cow). All cows will not need to lose the same amount of weight and because of this, they should be penned according to their BCS and fed appropriately. The level of restricted feeding will depend on the quality of the silage being fed. Watch BCS closely over the winter to ensure that cows are not losing too much or too little.



BETTER FARM UPDATE

Winter finishing diets on the BETTER Farms

How do you prevent acidosis brought on by dietary changes?



Gerard and John Grieve, the BETTER Farm representatives for Donegal thankfully have more than enough fodder for a six-month winter period but are finishing bulls on an intensive concentrate diet in order to have the animals slaughtered under 16 months of age. Acidosis is likely to be a bigger problem than normal this winter. While the good back end has been welcome countrywide, fodder reserves in certain parts of the country are depleted and farmers will look to fill the gap with concentrates. Feeding too much concentrate too soon will cause acidosis. The Grieves' bulls will go on an *ad lib* diet once they hit 12 months of age at 500kg. It is a specialised system and when we feed cattle we must remember that we are essentially feeding the bugs in their rumen. There are billions of bugs in an animal's rumen and the prevailing bug type will invariably be based on the

animal's diet. For example, the bulls in question will go on an intensive finishing diet so starch-digesting bugs will prevail, in comparison to fibre-digesting bugs, which would predominate in a forage-based scenario. These bugs do not like change and the rumen population needs enough time to evolve and adapt to manage the rise in acid production that is associated with a high starch diet. Acidosis can be acute, where the rumen pH is below 5.2 for an extended period, or sub-acute, where the pH drops to 5.5 or less for an extended period. Symptoms of acidosis include violent diarrhoea, abdominal kicking, rapid breathing, staggering and death. Ensuring cattle have increased sources of fibre while being built up to greater levels of feeding, and in particular, long fibre such as straw or hay will help. **Table 1** outlines the guidelines for adapting cattle to *ad lib* diets.

Table 1: Guidelines for adapting cattle to high concentrate rates.

Build Up	A.M. (kg)	P.M. (kg)	Fibre source
Day 1	3kg		High quality silage (DMD >70%)
Day 4	4kg		
Day 7	5kg		
Day 10	3.5kg	3.5kg	Straw/hay
Day 13	4kg	4kg	
Day 16	4.5kg	4.5kg	
Day 19	5kg	5kg	
Day 21/22	<i>Ad lib</i>		



RESEARCH UPDATE

Effects of finishing methods on beef

Aidan Moloney, Mark McGee, Lara Moran and Edward O'Riordan of AGRIC, Grange, Co. Meath examined carcass and meat quality in grass-based under-16 month suckler bulls finished using different methods.

Some beef markets require bulls to be slaughtered under 16 months of age, with a minimum carcass fat score of 2+ (6 on a 15 point scale). Bulls for these markets are usually finished indoors on high-concentrate rations. Inclusion of grazed grass or grass silage in the diet would decrease the cost of production. The aim of this study was to evaluate lower-cost production systems in terms of bull performance and meat quality. Spring-born, late-maturing breed suckler bulls (375kg) were offered grass silage *ad libitum* and 2kg concentrates per head daily, during the winter period. They were then assigned to one of four experimental treatments until slaughter at an average of 15 months of age/group. Treatments were: *ad libitum* concentrates plus grass silage, indoors (AD); grass silage *ad libitum* plus 5kg of concentrate offered indoors (SC); grazed grass plus 50% of the dietary dry matter intake as concentrate (GC); and, grazed grass only (G). After slaughter,

carcasses were weighed and graded for conformation and fatness. After 48 hours, striploin colour and ultimate pH were measured. Striploin steaks were used (after 14 day ageing) for instrumental texture (shear force) analysis and assessed for eating quality characteristics by trained assessors. Carcass weight averaged 358kg, 315kg, 288kg and 277kg for AD, SC, GC and G bulls, respectively. The corresponding fat scores were 7.2, 6.0, 4.2 and 3.6. Meat from grazed animals was darker than that from indoors animals (32.1 v 35.8) although no differences were found in ultimate pH. Shear force and sensory characteristics did not differ between striploin steaks from the AD or grazing bulls. Striploin steaks from the SC group were rated most tender but the difference from the other diets was small. While neither of the grazing groups achieved the current market specification for carcass fat score, this was not reflected in inferior eating quality of beef.



HEALTH & SAFETY

Be conscious of Weil's disease

This potentially fatal condition is contracted from material or watercourses contaminated by rat urine. Most commonly, humans are infected through cuts and wounds, especially to the hands. Infection results in fever, headache, vomiting and muscle pain. The condition can be confused with flu and, if untreated, can quickly escalate to cause

jaundice, meningitis and kidney failure. Precautions include control of rats, covering cuts and wounds with a waterproof bandage, and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) if you are handling material that might be contaminated. If you are unwell, seek medical care and let your doctor know about the possibility of Weil's disease.