

# BEEF

May 2019

## Graze at the right stage

Edited by  
**Catherine Egan,**  
Beef Specialist

About 90% of the grass production for the year grows from mid-April onwards. Grazing paddocks at the correct grass growth stage over the next two months is very important in order to ensure you are: (1), feeding your spring-calved cows well; (2), achieving target daily liveweight gain on growing stock; and, (3), hitting the correct post-grazing residual of 4cm.

The first step is to get out and walk the grazing ground to assess ground conditions, damage to paddocks and grass covers. It is important that paddocks that may have been damaged in March/April are let dry out. Care should be taken to ensure these same paddocks are not damaged again during the grazing season as this could result in up to a 50% drop in grass yield over the course of the season.

### Ideal yield

Research has shown that 8-10cm (1,400kg DM/ha) is the ideal pre-grazing yield for mid-season grazing. This corresponds to the three-leaf grass growth stage, and it applies across a range of stocking rates. If grass growth is very strong and exceeding demand, rotation length can be reduced in the short term, e.g., by taking out bales. On the other hand, if growth is slow then grass allowance should be reduced and rotation length increased by adding in supplementary feed. The target is to 'Grow in three weeks and graze in three days'. If covers are too low – below 8cm (<1,000kg DM/ha) – then intakes will suffer and grass growth rate will also decrease. If grazing covers are consistently too high – above 12cm (>2,000kg DM/ha) – then paddocks will not be cleaned out and quality will be reduced in the next rotation.



## Grazing ground

Most drystock farms will benefit from one unit of nitrogen (N)/acre/day fertiliser this month to boost

grass growth and sward tillering.

Keeping N spread keeps good-quality leafy grass ahead of the stock, maximising weight gains, and if paddocks get too strong, don't be afraid to take them out as high-quality baled silage or taken out along with the first cut. One note of caution: if extra potassium (K) is being applied on grazing ground to build soil K index rates, only apply maintenance rates (Index 3) of K in springtime. Additional K build-up rates should be applied in the autumn to avoid problems with grass tetany in springtime. On grazing ground it is recommended to apply 16 units of sulphur (S)

per acre per year from April to July; therefore consider spreading a product like Sulfa CAN, which contains 3 to 5% S or a compound (18-6-12 + S), with S included instead of CAN. Apply in two or three splits over the summer.

### Phosphorus for grazing

Phosphorus (P) is essential for early season growth. Having a supply of P fertiliser in the soil will help the repair and recovery process of the sward. An application of one bag/acre of 18:6:12 or 14:7:14 will benefit the production and survival of ryegrass. On index 1 and 2 soils apply 50% of P in the spring time and the remaining 50% in May/June. Every 100kg of beef liveweight gain (LW) removes 1kg P and ~1.5kg K (leaving in finished animals).



## Second phase of dairy calf to beef programme launched

The second phase of the Teagasc Green Acres Dairy Calf to Beef Programme was

launched in early April. It follows on from the first successful phase of the programme that ended in 2018.

The aim of the programme is to share information from the 14 participating farms with beef producers across the country to help farmers improve the performance of their businesses. Two dedicated full-time programme

advisers, David Argue and Sean Cummins, will work closely with the farmers and Alan Dillon is the programme manager. The main focus will be improving the overall farm profitability through grassland management, calf rearing skills, animal health and financial management.

This is a joint industry-funded initiative that is supported by: MSD Animal Health; Volac; Corteva Agriscience; Liffey Mills; Munster Bovine; Drummonds; and, Agriland.

## Date for the Diary

teagasc  
Association of Food Business Advisors  
**DairyBEEF2019**  
Tuesday, 21st May | 11am  
Teagasc, Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford



Teagasc Johnstown Castle will be welcoming beef, dairy and dairy-beef farmers alike to their research farm for the 2019 Dairy-Beef open day on Tuesday May 21 from 11.00am. The theme of the event is 'Advancing Knowledge for an Evolving Industry', with a host of production technologies on display. The day will feature four villages: Systems/Economics; Genetics; Calf Rearing and

Health; and, Grassland. The villages will host a number of demonstrations, with the ultimate aim to equip farmers with the tools to handle future challenges. The open day promises to be a great learning opportunity for those already involved or getting involved in the dairy-beef industry, so mark it in your diaries! This is a beef and dairy KT-approved event.

## BETTER FARM UPDATE



### Reaping the rewards of reseeding in Sligo

Glen McDermott is seeing the benefits from the reseeding he undertook last year on his Sligo farm.



Last year, although many challenges were faced at farm level, some farmers decided to reseed a

proportion of the farm as part of their ongoing reseeding programme. One of those farmers was Glen McDermott. Glen took the opportunity to carry out extensive work on a block of ground he secured at the beginning of the year. Slightly over 20 acres of ground was

mulched, burnt off and subsequently reseeded. Roadways were installed and water pipes were laid. Glen made the decision to purchase a disc-harrow given the large amount of ground being reseeded not to mention the fact he plans on reseeding another 20 acres this year. A heavy-grassland mix with an intermediate heading date consisting of 60% diploids/40% tetraploids was sown. Below in **Table 1** are the projected contractor costs for carrying out reseeding.

**Table 1: Contractor reseeding costs.**

Action	Projected costs (€/acre)
Spraying	10
Ploughing (€ 30), till and sowing (one pass) (€ 40)	70
Fert 2.5 bags 10-10-20	54
Fert spreading	10
Levelling	10
Rolling	10
Lime and spreading (2t/ac)	24
Grass seed	70
Post-emergence spray	18
Spray	10
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>€302/acre</b>

# RESEARCH UPDATE

## Quality grass silage for beef cattle



E.G. O’Riordan and M. McGee of Teagasc, Grange, report on the impact of digestibility of grass silage on beef production.

The majority of grass silage for winter 2019/2020 will be harvested in May and June and most silage paddocks have been closed and fertilised since late-March/early-April. While a number of factors can affect pasture yield and quality, harvesting date is one of the main influences determining the feeding potential of the resulting grass-silage. The pattern of change in grass yield on silage swards over time is depicted in **Figure 1** (blue line). It shows a steady increase in yield throughout the month of May and a slower rate of accumulation in June. The potential nutritive value of the crop slowly declines during the first three weeks of May but typically stays above 75% DMD. However, later in the month (depending on

sward age and grass varieties sown), the pasture begins to produce stems and seed heads. As a result of the changing plant structure, its nutritive and feeding value declines considerably. By late June DMD can be less than 60%. Depending on the animal type(s) to be fed and their target performance level over the winter, a decision relating to harvest date needs to be made. Data from Grange (see **Table 2**) shows that as DMD increases, animal dry matter intake, liveweight gain, carcass gain and feed conversion efficiency all improve. At a DMD of 70% or greater, finishing animals can achieve a liveweight gain in excess of 0.66kg/day on silage only.

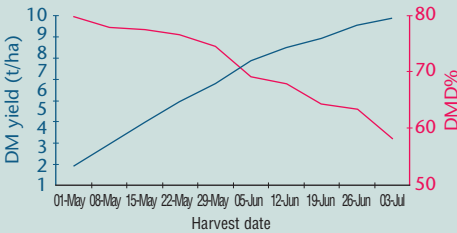


FIGURE 1: Pattern of change in grass yield and digestibility (Source: Teagasc, Grange Beef Research Centre).

**Table 2: Digestibility - what difference does it make for beef cattle.**

	Silage digestibility			
	DMD g/kg	750	700	650
Intake (kg/day)	9.0	8.3	7.6	7.0
Livewt. gain (kg/day)	0.83	0.66	0.49	0.31
Carcass gain (kg/day)	0.51	0.39	0.27	0.15
Feed effic. (DMI/carc. gain)	17.6	21.3	28.1	46.7

Source: Teagasc, Grange

# HEALTH & SAFETY

## Fill tyres with care

Vehicle and machine tyre maintenance is critical for safety. Tyres should be inspected on a weekly basis for inflation pressure and damage. Use a reliable pressure gauge for inflation and always know the correct pressure. If a tyre side wall fails

during inflation an explosive force is released at an angle of up to 45 degrees. Use a clip-on coupling to connect the airline to the tyre valve and also use a long hose to keep out of the explosion trajectory.

