

BEEF

September 2019

Chemical fertiliser deadline approaches

Edited by
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As the deadline for applying chemical nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) approaches, there is still time to get the final application spread (September 15).

Research in Johnstown Castle has shown that the earlier you apply N in autumn, the more grass you will grow. Every kilo of N applied gave a response of 19kg of grass DM for September. It is important to build covers to extend the number of days at grass.

Lime should be spread on farms when ground conditions are good to rectify

paddocks with a low soil pH (<6.3 pH). Any remaining slurry can be spread on grazing ground now as rotation length is extended (35 days).

Slurry should be targeted to land where silage has been cut to help build P and potassium (K) offtakes. Also target slurry to index 1 and 2 soils to build P and K levels. Where additional K is applied as muriate of potash, aim to apply in September/October when ground conditions allow. Beware of grass tetany risk in autumn-calving herds.

September open days

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| September 10 | 5.00pm: James and John Flaherty, Kilmurry Cordal, Castleisland, Co. Kerry V92 HRN0 |
| September 11 | Teagasc/Bord Bia farm walk, Limerick Pallaskerry Agricultural College |
| September 12 | 5.00pm: Tommy Holmes, Tullysleeve, Ballina, Co. Mayo F26 K7W0 |
| September 25 | Teagasc/Bord Bia farm walk Kilkenny Kildalton Agricultural College |

BEAM open until September 8

The Beef Exceptional Aid Measure (BEAM) scheme opened on August 19 to provide financial aid to Irish beef farmers and is targeted towards those farmers most affected. The deadline to apply for BEAM is September 8 (at time of print - please monitor farm press for updates). Applications can be accepted online through AgFood.ie or contact your local Teagasc advisor. BEAM is being provided in light of the difficult circumstances that Irish beef farmers have been facing as a result of market volatility and uncertainty arising from Brexit. BEAM is a demand-led, voluntary scheme. Farmers who meet the initial eligibility criteria will then have to commit to meeting the following conditions in order to qualify for aid. Each participant must:

- be a member of a Bord Bia Quality Assurance Scheme or a Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) environmental scheme, such as the Beef Data and Genetics Programme (BDGP), the Beef Environmental Efficiency Pilot (BEEP), Organic Farming Scheme (OFS), or the Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment Scheme (GLAS); and,
- reduce the production of bovine livestock

manure nitrogen (total figure) per herd by 5% for a target period (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021) compared to a reference period (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019).

Key points

- Aid will be paid on adult cattle slaughtered between September 24, 2018 and May 12, 2019, at a rate of €100 per animal subject to a maximum of 100 finished animals per herd.
- Aid will also be paid on suckler cows that calved in 2018, at a rate of €40 per animal subject to a maximum of 40 sucklers per herd.
- Dairy herds are not eligible for the measure, with the exception of dairy herds of fewer than 40 dairy cows.
- Animals controlled by slaughtering establishments, and dealer/agent herds, are not eligible for this financial aid.
- In the event BEAM is oversubscribed, payment rates may be subject to minor revision.

Forthcoming open day hosts

Kerry – September 10

James and John Flaherty fly the flag for Kerry in the BETTER Beef Farm Challenge. Having joined the programme in 2017, they farm 41 hectares near Castleisland. The plan, as part of the programme, is to increase from 35 suckler cows to 50 suckler cows.

They will also change from a weanling system to a beef finishing system. A dairy calf-to-beef system has also been introduced.

The cow type on the farm is predominantly Parthenaise-cross, with Charolais, Limousin, Salers and Simmental strains running through. The Flahertys have operated a 100% artificial insemination (AI) for the first time this year.



Mayo – September 12

Tommy Holmes is farming a fragmented 18 hectares on the outskirts of Ballina in County Mayo. The land is predominantly free draining and capable of growing high volumes of grass annually. Since the programme commenced, investment in grazing infrastructure, soil fertility and reseeding is paying dividends with the farm recording grass growth in excess of 15t dm/ha annually. An autumn-calving suckler herd is in operation on the farm with all progeny taken to beef. Males are slaughtered as bulls at 16-20 months and heifers off grass at similar ages. To complement the suckler cows, a store-to-beef system is in operation on the farm with males being purchased throughout the year and taken to beef as bulls at 20 months.

BEEP update

Over 50,000 cow/calf pairs have been weighed to date as part of the BEEP scheme. Analysis of cows by Replacement Index across breed star rating is detailed in **Table 1**.

Five-star cows were 27kg lighter, yet their calves were 17kg heavier at 200 days of age resulting in a 5% higher cow/calf weaning percentage than that of the one-star cows. Weights must be recorded

from March 8 to November 1, 2019. Having weighed the animals on farm, weights must be submitted to the Irish Cattle Breeders Federation (ICBF) database within seven days of the weighing event. To access your herd's Weaning Performance Report, login to your HerdPlus account at www.icbf.com. Go to the 'Reports' section and click on 'Weight'.

Table 1: Performance of cows based on BEEP data recorded to date. There are approximately 29,000 cow/calf pairs included in the analysis where calves were weighed between 150 and 300 days.

Replacement Index Star Rating	No. cows	Average Replacement Index	Average cow weight	Calf 200-day (kg)	Cow/calf weaning % weight (kg)
5	10,364	€129	622	285	47
4	6,248	€ 93	628	279	45
3	4,562	€ 76	632	277	45
2	3,998	€ 58	638	273	43
1	3,482	€ 27	649	268	42
Difference		€102	-27	17	5

*Cow/calf weaning % is the calf's 200-day weight as a percentage of the cow's weight. Source: ICBF, 2019

HEALTH & SAFETY

Sustainable farming

'Enhancing Sustainability' is the theme of this year's Teagasc exhibit at the National Ploughing Championships (NPC). Sustainability has many components including economic, environmental and social ones. Health and safety is a key component of sustainability as a serious injury or ill health could jeopardise both life and livelihood. Maintaining health and safety requires your ongoing commitment and needs to be approached in a systematic way. Visit the Teagasc exhibit and the HSA Farm

Safety Village at the NPC to keep up to date on health and safety issues. A separate newsletter this month gives details of Teagasc half-day training on the Farm Safety Risk Assessment.

Simple measures give safety, e.g., put a wheel on a gate and you significantly reduce strain when opening and closing it.



RESEARCH UPDATE

Improving suckler reproduction

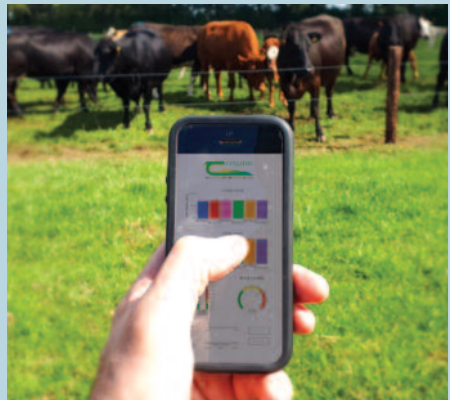


Richard Lynch of Teagasc, AGRIC, Grange, Dunsany, Co. Meath and Alan Kelly of University College Dublin, Belfield, Dublin 4 report on their research into a decision support tool to aid in the reproductive management of suckler beef herds.

A profitable suckler beef herd must achieve high levels of reproductive efficiency in order to wean a live calf per cow sent for breeding each year. Achieving a mean calving date as close as possible to the date when stock are turned out to pasture also ensures suckler herds can capitalise on the cost efficiencies associated with grazed grass. However, figures on the national beef cow herd would suggest that the level of reproductive management on some farms is making it difficult for targets such as these to be achieved. With this in mind, a study was developed to quantify the effects of various herd management strategies on the reproductive performance of pasture-based suckler beef herds.

One of the most significant findings which arose from the study was the impact that body condition score (BCS) at calving has on the time it takes for cows to return to heat post calving. The results showed cows which calved with a BCS below 2.25 are, on average, two weeks longer returning to heat than cows which calve at an optimum level of BCS (2.5 - 2.75). Measures such as increasing the energy density of the diet post calving can somewhat reduce this extended return to heat period (a 10% increase in energy fed above that required for a cow calving in optimum condition can advance heat by two days). The results also indicated that herds which calve in an adequate BCS at calving can condense

their calving pattern further, by implementing measures such as temporarily breaking the bond between the cow and calf. Study findings have indicated that herds implementing this approach can advance heat in cows by up to three weeks without affecting calf growth rates. Findings such as these are being integrated into a tool which will allow an adviser/farmer to input the current reproductive performance of their herd and then select a range of management approaches, such as above, to implement. Based on these inputs, the tool will then have the ability to predict future calving distributions and calving rates, with assessments of their impact on whole farm economic and environmental performance.



A new tool is being planned which will have the ability to predict future calving distributions and calving rates.