

# BEEF

November 2019

## October grass = spring grass

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October grass is spring grass – so don't graze it in November! About two-thirds of the grass grazed in spring (February/March) is grass that grew during October/early

November. Therefore it is essential that fields/paddocks closed during October stay closed until spring. What is grazed now won't be available in the spring. Remember every day the animal is at grass next

spring is worth about €2/LU/day. 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 100kg of grass DM/ha in spring. The target is to have a minimum of 50% of the farm closed by November 1. Block grazing and back fencing are useful tools to help get the grazing job completed. Using a strip wire and moving animals once a day will improve the level of grass utilised and achieve greater clean out of paddocks.

## Should I vaccinate my weanlings?

This is a topic that is often discussed at knowledge transfer (KT) group meetings. Respiratory diseases are by far the most common cause of ill-health and death in young stock over the winter housing period. When a pneumonia outbreak occurs in a herd there is usually a fire-brigade type response to

it. Unlike with a fire though, it is rarely stopped immediately. That is why the costs mount up. Apart from the cost, a pneumonia outbreak can be very stressful for the farmer involved. Virus pneumonia affects the best calves in a herd just as much as the worst calves. It takes a lot of time and effort to get

a group of sick animals back on track. By far the best approach all round is to avoid a pneumonia outbreak in the first place and this is where vaccines have a real role to play.

The cost of a preventative vaccination programme against the most common of the pneumonia

viruses would be less than 20% of the cost of such an outbreak. To ensure maximum cover is provided it is necessary with most vaccination programmes that a booster shot, as well as the initial primary shot, is given. These are usually three to four weeks apart, so plan ahead.

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## Body condition scoring cows

At housing, spring-calving suckler cows should be at their peak body condition score (BCS). On the 0 to 5 scoring system, many cows this year will be between 3 and 4. This means that they can and should lose weight over winter, leaving them fitter and less likely to have calving difficulties next spring. Properly managed, a cow may drop from a BCS of 3.5 at housing to 2.75 at calving without any adverse effects on the cow or the calf. Dropping 0.75 of a BCS means a cow will lose between 50 and 60kg liveweight. In feed terms, it equates to the equivalent of 210kg of barley or up to 1.5 tons of a 67% DMD silage, which in monetary terms is around €40 to €45 per cow. Cows need to be condition scored at housing so that they can be fed

accordingly. They should be monitored throughout the dry period and moved where necessary from one group to another. Cows above 3.0 should be slimmed down. Those between 2.5 and 3.0 should be maintained and the small number below 2.5 need to be fed extra. When deciding how much to feed each group of cows, the quality of the forage they are eating will determine whether or not it can be fed *ad-lib* or if it needs to be restricted/diluted with straw. Even when cows are being restricted pre-calving, a good mineral supplementation is essential in the four to six weeks pre-calving for cow health and calf vitality. A good mineral will contain adequate amounts of magnesium, selenium, iodine and vitamin E.

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## Supplement weanlings

A number of on-farm weighing studies over the years have shown that weanlings often underperform over the winter feeding months. There are a number of factors which will affect this performance such as stocking rate, ventilation and health status; however, the winter feeding programme probably has the biggest influence on performance.

The main reason why winter feeding is often not adequate is that weanlings are not fed enough meal for the quality of silage they are on.



Weanlings will underperform if not fed enough meal.

**Table 1: Performance of weanlings on silage of different DMD.**

Silage DMD	Daily gain (kg) – silage only	Meal needed per day (to achieve 0.5kg/day)
75%	0.50	0
70%	0.35	1.5kg
65%	0.20	2.5kg
60%	0	3.5kg

**Table 1** shows the performance that you could expect from weanlings where they are on silage alone of varying DMD. Having your silage tested will tell you what quality it is and how much meal should be fed per day to weanlings.

The silage test will also tell you what crude protein the silage is. This will give an indication of the crude protein that needs to be in the ration so that the overall diet being

fed ensures the weanlings are getting enough protein daily.

Where you have a high-quality but low-protein silage, you will not be feeding a lot of meal but the protein content in the meal should be high.

Whereas with a low DMD, high-protein silage the meal feeding level per day will be high and the protein content within the meal will be lower.

## Teagasc Green Acres Update



Aidan Maguire, a participant in the Teagasc Green Acres Calf To Beef

Programme, runs a dairy calf-to-beef system on his farm outside Navan in Co. Meath. Aidan's plan is

to buy in 110 calves annually, 80 early maturing bulls and heifers in the spring time and 30 autumn-born Friesian bull calves in autumn. All stock are to be killed at under two years of age. Currently on Aidan's farm, there are 80 spring-born calves being housed and a plan is being implemented as to how these animals will be managed over the winter months. There are three tasks that have to be done in order to carry out the housing plan on the farm. These

are: weighing the cattle at housing; completing a forage analysis; and, selecting a supplementary ration.

Based on the last weighing of these animals and their average daily gain to that point, these cattle are expected to weigh an average of 230kg at housing. The calves will be weighed at housing and split into three groups based on their weight. This will allow for more targeted winter meal feeding and better overall use of supplementary feed. Lighter calves will be targeted for extra supplementation so that by the spring, they will have caught up to the target turnout weight of 310kg. It is hoped that there will be a group of heavier calves that will be able to reach this target without any meal feeding, if forage quality is good enough. Aidan is awaiting the results of two silage samples that have been sent for testing. It is

hoped that these samples will have a dry matter digestibility of approximately 75%, which will provide an average daily gain of 0.5kg, without feeding any meal. The meal supplementation to the different calf groups will be based on the results of this test. The ration fed will be chosen

to have high energy (0.95 UFL), 16% crude protein, fortified with vitamins and minerals, front loaded at the start of the winter to maximise the use of compensatory growth next spring, and supplemented to match silage quality targeting a daily gain of 0.6kg.

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## ONE HEALTH: Awareness to Action Antimicrobial and Anthelmintic Resistance Conference

The ONE HEALTH - Awareness to Action, Antimicrobial and Anthelmintic Resistance Conference, is taking place on November 27 in Tullamore Court Hotel. It will focus on increasing awareness of these issues among farmers and professionals serving the agri-food industry. There will also be an emphasis on clear concise practical actions which can be taken on Irish farms to reduce the need to use antimicrobials

and anthelmintics. Resistance to antimicrobials is one of the major current challenges facing the human population. It is estimated that by 2050, 10 million people will die annually due to antimicrobial resistance (AMR) unless major steps are immediately undertaken to reduce antimicrobial usage. The conference is free to attend but registration is required. Visit: [www.teagasc.ie/amrconference](http://www.teagasc.ie/amrconference).

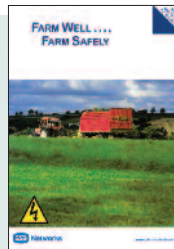
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## HEALTH & SAFETY

### Let there be light

The clocks have gone back so darkness has increased. Check lighting around your farm to see if it is adequate.

For example, cleanliness of polycarbonate fluorescent light covers in livestock houses is important, as dirt can reduce light output by 30%.



*Check electrical and lighting installations.*



Make sure to use a secure platform when accessing heights, as falls cause 11% of serious accidents. It is a good time to test all your residual current device (RCD) electrical safety switches by safely using the test button and resetting.