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## Large penalties looming on BDGP payments

We are in the sixth and final year of the first Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP 1). It is this year that your herd must meet the most difficult targets set by the scheme, those of the replacement strategy. **Table 1** shows the requirements and the corresponding penalties of failing to meet the measures.

The big one is the 50% requirement for four- and five-star cows/heifers on October 31, which incurs a 140% penalty. So, not only will you not receive any payment for this year, you will also be deducted a further 40% of the gross payment from another scheme.

The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) will be

**Table 1: Deadlines, requirements and penalties on the BDGP.**

1. Female requirement (applicable to all herds).			
October 31, 2018 (20%)	20% of your reference number of cows/heifers must be genotyped four or five star.	DEADLINE PASSED	
October 31, 2020 (50%)	50% of your reference number of cows/heifers must be genotyped four or five star. To be eligible females must be more than 16 months of age, i.e., born before June 30, 2019.	Deadline due	140% penalty
2. Stock bull requirement (only applicable to herds using stock bulls).			
June 30, 2019	At least one genotyped four- or five-star bull on the farm.	DEADLINE PASSED	
June 30, 2020	At least one genotyped four- or five-star bull on the farm.	Deadline due	60% penalty
3. AI requirement (only applicable to herds using AI).			
	80% of all AI straws used must be from four- or five-star bulls on either the replacement or terminal index.	Annual commitment	60% penalty

*Note: If using both stock bulls and AI you must meet the requirements for both.*

writing to the farms not meeting their requirements to inform them of where they stand and what the penalty for non-compliance will be. However, this information is available online on the ICBF website, which is live and will give you the most up-to-date picture. Simply login to your ICBF account, go to Services → Beef Data and Genomics Programme → Eligibility Profiles. This screen lays out very clearly your own situation and is your starting point. If you are meeting your requirements you can see by how much and ensure you stay that way by not selling eligible animals. If you are not meeting the targets what are your options?:

1. You could still meet the requirements in-herd by genotyping females born before June 30, 2019 and ensuring you have their genomic evaluation back by October 31. Use your BDGP Euro-Star Report and pick the cows/heifers that are four or five star but do not have a genomic evaluation. You must genotype 60% of the reference number of females anyway. You can request hair cards from the ICBF for more animals at a cost of €22 each. This service is available online under

Genomic Services. To ensure you have a genomic evaluation back to be included for the October 31 deadline, **samples must be in the laboratory by July 8.**

2. Buy in genotyped four- or five-star cows/heifers. The mart screen will show if an animal is four or five star, but you need to ensure it also shows a genomic evaluation down on the bottom right of the screen. If not, you will have to get her genotyped and she may fall below four star on genotyping. The same applies if buying directly off farm, ensure the seller prints you her star rating, she is genotyped and born prior to June 30, 2019 before you purchase.
3. Maintain your four- or five-star stock bull, but if you replace him it must be with another four- or five-star stock bull.
4. AI is straight forward, but if you are using both AI and stock bulls, you must meet the requirements of both.

If you are unsure about any of the above please contact your local Teagasc advisor or the ICBF on 023-883 2883.

## Next calf to beef farm walk

Farming in Myshall, Co. Carlow, Shane Cranny will host the second farm walk of the Teagasc Green Acres Calf to Beef Programme on **March 11 at 12:00pm**. A recent graduate of the Teagasc Green Cert Programme, he operates a dairy calf to beef system – alongside a suckler enterprise – on 31.5ha of free-draining land. After initially purchasing spring-born calves, Shane switched to autumn-born calves in 2018, buying 60 Friesian bull calves. He is targeting slaughter off grass as steers at 22-24 months of age, and



knows excellent grassland management and a long grazing season is required to achieve this. In 2019, Shane's 2018 autumn-born steers gained 0.85kg/day since arrival on-farm and he slaughtered the majority of his 2017-born steers at 23.4 months, with an average carcass weight of 340kg off grass with some meal. The open day on Shane's farm will focus on a number of important aspects of calf to beef systems, including calf health, nutrition, profitability, grassland management, and silage quality. The event will be signposted from the main Carlow to Wexford road or can be located through the use of the Eircode (**R21 X224**).

## Listen to the latest beef advice

Teagasc has launched a beef podcast called *The Beef Edge*, which is targeted at beef farmers and people working in the beef industry. The series of podcasts aims to provide up-to-date advice and insights to Irish beef farms. You can go back and listen to any podcast you like, as often as you like. You can download it for free on to your smartphone

and listen via your hands-free car stereo, in the tractor cab or anywhere else that suits and is safe.



Teagasc beef specialists, advisors and researchers join presenter Catherine Egan for the fortnightly podcast to cover a variety of topics. The most recent podcast focuses on sourcing calves from the dairy herd, spring grassland management and soil fertility tips. You can catch up on all the shows and interviews from *The Beef Edge* podcast on the Teagasc website at

[www.teagasc.ie/thebeefedge](http://www.teagasc.ie/thebeefedge)

or you can listen on Apple and Google podcasts, as well as Spotify.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

### Think ahead to prevent injury and illness



Preventing injury and ill health requires thinking ahead.

Farms are very dynamic workplaces in spring, with a lot of dangerous movement – tractors and machines, livestock, bales, and fertiliser. In other dangerous industries (e.g., oil and smelting) zero-injury levels are being achieved routinely. This is done using a rigorous



*Danger – tractor movement at corner.*



*Beware of cow attack.*

approach to technology adoption and work practice. Checklists are used to ensure that all measures are implemented. This spring protect yourself, especially from cows around calving and knockdowns from tractors and other machines, which are the biggest killers on Irish farms.

## RESEARCH UPDATE

### Reducing nitrogen excretion



MARK McGEE and AIDAN MOLONEY of AGRIC, Teagasc Grange report on how to lower the excretion of nitrogen into the air and water from grass-fed beef cattle.

Efficient conversion of herbage nitrogen (N) into meat protein is central to sustainable beef production systems. However, in beef cattle partitioning dietary N into tissues ('growth') is relatively inefficient and substantial amounts of N are excreted in faeces and urine. Excreted N can contribute beneficially to soil fertility and thus crop production, but if it escapes to ground or surface water, or to the air as a greenhouse gas, it becomes a pollutant. Since N in urine is mainly inorganic and soluble, it is more likely to be lost to water or the atmosphere (e.g., nitrate leaching and nitrous oxide emissions) than the mainly organic N in faeces. N intake is the main driver of N excretion but this relationship needs to be evaluated and quantified in beef cattle consuming fresh grass, the cornerstone of Irish beef production.

The effects of two 'contrasting' fertiliser N application rates to grass - 15 (low-N) or 80 (high-N) kg N/ha per 'cut' - on N metabolism in zero-grazed beef cattle consuming autumn, spring and summer pasture was examined at Grange. N intake was higher for high-N compared to low-N grass, reflecting a higher herbage N (crude protein) concentration. Compared to low-N, total (faeces and urine) N excretion was 30%, 12% and 20% higher for



*Beef cattle consuming fresh grass is the cornerstone of Irish beef production.*

high-N in autumn, spring and summer pasture, respectively. Corresponding values for urine N excretion were 56%, 20% and 26%. In practice however, the reduction in grass dry matter (DM) production associated with lower fertiliser N application rates needs to be considered. In another experiment which evaluated the effects of supplementation with a low crude-protein, high-energy supplement (i.e., citrus pulp offered at 0.22 of dietary DM intake) on N excretion in zero-grazed beef cattle, total and urine N excretion was reduced by 10% and 21%, respectively, compared to unsupplemented grass. In conclusion, reducing fertiliser N application rate to pasture and supplementing grass with a low-protein, high-energy feed are practical strategies to decrease total and urinary N excretion from grass-based beef production systems.