

Teagasc Dairy Beef Programme

Update, Johnstown Castle

Date of writing: 26th October 2017

Covering period: September-October

Animal performance:

Yearlings

- The heifers were separated from steers at grass on the 15th September and started on concentrates for finishing. They began on ~2.5 kg concentrates per head per day.
- All were housed on 2nd October. They were weighed on day of housing and 4 days later.
- Heifers will be finished on *ad lib* good quality silage plus ~5 kg concentrates/day. We hope to slaughter our first group of heifers towards the end of November.
- There is large variation in weights, with 250kg+ difference between the heaviest and lightest heifer at last weighing.
- Steers will be fed good quality silage over the winter only and will be turned out in the spring (March/April) and finished off grass according to the 26/27 month production system.

Treatment	02/10/2017, LW		06/10/2017, LW	
High	422 kg	417 kg heifers	444 kg	448 kg heifers
		427 kg steers		440 kg steers
Medium	453 kg	437 kg heifers	459 kg	463 kg heifers
		471 kg steers		454 kg steers
Low	441 kg	431 kg heifers	440 kg	440 kg heifers
		448 kg steers		465 kg steers
Average	438 kg		452 kg	

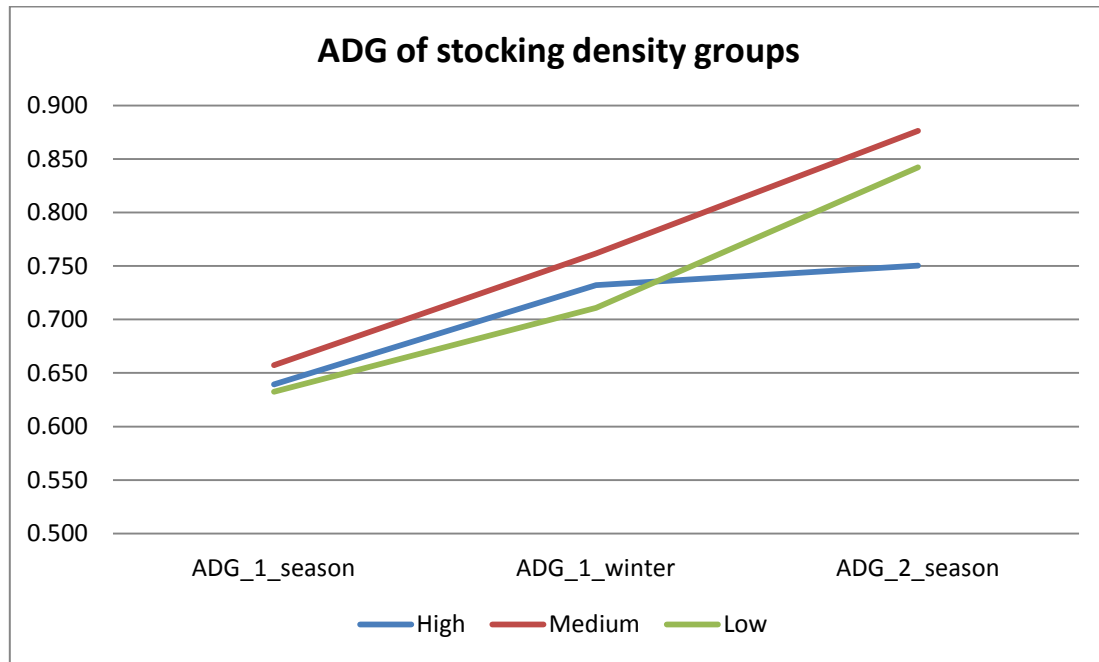
Note: The difference between the two dates is due to gut fill effect.

Slaughter protocol 2017

- Heifers will be selected for slaughter based on body condition score (BCS). The target BCS at slaughter is 3.75.
- For logistical reasons heifers will be selected for slaughter on three dates. The slaughter dates will be mid-November, mid-December and early-February approximately. The slaughter dates will be c. 40 days apart.
- During this period heifers will be BCS and live weights recorded routinely.
- Consistent with the protocol of the heifers, steers will be selected for slaughter based on BCS (target 3.75). Steers will be selected for slaughter on three dates.
- Steers that have the required BCS during the indoor period will be removed from the group and slaughtered on the same days as the heifers. The remaining steers will be pasture grazed for their third grazing season and slaughtered in May and June.

Teagasc Dairy Beef Programme

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Steers (left) and heifers (right) housed during October in the new shed facilities.

ADG Second season at grass			
	High	Medium	Low
Heifer	0.73	0.82	0.81
Steer	0.77	0.94	0.86

2017 Calves

- Calves were housed on the 20th October due to the poor ground conditions and the lack of grass growth. They were weighted at housing and 4 days later.
- A group of poorer calves containing calves from all stocking density groups were housed earlier (~25th September). These are on a straw bed. They have received another worm dose (Ivomec), coccidiosis



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treatment and Grovit.

- Calves are being fed 1-1.5kg concentrates/head/day with silage.
- The rest of the calves are on slats, with the smaller calves in each stocking density group housed separately to the main grazing groups to avoid competition.
- Large variation within the calves is evident. From the 12th October weights, there was a difference 176kg between the heaviest (266kg) and the lightest (89.5kg) calves on trial.

	12/10/2017, LW (kg)	*20/10/2017 (kg)	*24/10/2017 (kg)	ADG first season
High	176	194	202	0.531
Medium	189	191	207	0.623
Low	175	202	205	0.565
Average	180	195	205	0.572

*The housing and 4day weights do not contain the weights of the poor calves that were housed early.

Health:

- Since their arrival in June/July, 12 trial calves have died. From 4 post mortems (3 in lab, 1 by vet on farm), consolidated lungs and severe scarring from a historic illness appears to be the issue. One calf died from Salmonella at grass before housing this month.
- Ringworm is still prevalent in the poor calves, which suggests compromised immunity. Calves are being sampled for mycoplasma this week.

- For the parasitology trial, the calves were individually sampled on 7th Sept (117 calves sampled as there were only 7 sires that had the required 12 or more calves)

Egg Counts	8 Aug	21 Aug	4 Sept	25 Sept
High	0	390	835	0
Medium	10	255	835	0
Low	10	135	185	10

and dosed with Endospec. Post-dosing faecal samples were taken on the 25th September to ensure egg counts had returned to zero.

- The huge jump in the egg counts was surprising and suggests two things- 1) low immunity levels in the calves and 2) the ground in Johnstown has a high worm burden.
- There are ~30 calves now housed for extra care. In total, 77 calves have been identified as 'poor' (i.e. sickly, poor performing, small), while 166 are 'good'. From the weights taken 12th Oct, there was almost 40kg between the good calves and the poor calves.

Grassland management:

- September saw 161 ml of rain fall in Johnstown castle. This lead to the early housing of the older cattle at the beginning of October.
- Almost 60 ml of rain fell in October, alongside hurricane conditions, which ultimately led to the housing of the calves on the 20th October (a week earlier than last year).
- Closing farm cover was taken 25th October. Only commercial calves remained outside on the spare ground, and these will be housed over the next few days . Average closing farm cover across the entire farm was 645 kgDM/ha.

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Farm Cover 25/10/2017 (kgDM/ha)	
High	720
Medium	641
Low	633
Spare	585

- To date the reseeded ground has not been grazed. Unless the ground conditions dry up considerably, this will not be grazed until the spring.
- Grass growth saw a massive drop, with growth averaging 21 kgDM/ha/day currently. This is comparable to Pasturebase data; Leinster grass growth is averging 29 kgDM/ha/day, with Wexford growing 27 kgDM/ha/day for the same date.

