

Teagasc Dairy Beef Research Programme

Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford

Update: October 2020

Rainfall and mean temperatures were relatively similar to 2019, and allowed some cattle to stay out at grass until the end of the month. Grass growth reduced significantly, averaging 23 kg DM/ha/day. Because demand with both bullocks and heifers at grass was twice as high as the daily growth, and conditions at grass were deteriorating, it was decided to house the bullocks on the 8th October in order to keep the heifers at grass longer. The calves, especially those that had been originally assigned to graze the new multispecies trial plots, have been doing well since they were housed at the end of September. The heifers were body condition scored on the 29th October; some of these were near fit and will be drafted out the second week of November for slaughter.

October 2020	
Total rainfall (ml)	137.5
Mean temperature (°C)	10.5
Mean soil temperature (°C)	10.3

Animal Performance:

Yearlings (20-month-old)

- The bullocks were housed on the 8th October. They gained 0.79 kg/day over their second season at grass and were 467 kg on average at housing.
- The steers are being fed *ad lib* silage only indoors. They will be dosed for fluke (Endofluke) and worms (Ivermec Classic injectable) within the first 2 weeks of November.
- Nine pens of bullocks were penned in groups of seven according to stocking rate and breed, and each pen balanced as close as possible for weight. Intakes will be run on these cattle over the course of the winter period.
- The heifers were kept outside until the 22nd October and were then housed as conditions at grass deteriorated and farm cover reduced to 600 kg DM/ha on average across the farmlets. Average farm cover was particularly low on the High SR farmlet, at 512 kg DM/ha on the 19th October.
- The heifers were weighed on the 29th October and averaged 484 kg, having gained 0.81 kg/day during their second season at grass.
- The heifers were being fed 3 kg of 14% beef finisher ration at grass, once housed they continued on 3 kg ration alongside *ad lib* silage and were subsequently increased to 4 kg ration on the 2nd November, and to 5 kg on the 4th November.
- All bullocks and heifers were clipped (back and tails) as they were housed.

Table 1. Yearling weight and ADG, October 2020

	Heifer		Steer	
	Live weight (kg)	ADG second season (kg/day)	Live weight (kg)	ADG second season (kg/day)
High	478	0.85	466	0.77
Medium	482	0.76	468	0.80
Low	493	0.81	466	0.81

Teagasc Dairy Beef Research Programme

Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford

Spring 2020 calves

- All calves were given RSP booster vaccination (Bovilis Bovipast) on the 19th October. It was important for them to receive this two weeks before they were moved from the straw shed to the slatted unit in case stress provoked an outbreak of pneumonia.
- The calves that had originally been put on the multispecies trial (~180 calves) appear to have turned the corner. These were weighed on the 4th November and brought over to the new slatted shed over on the beef yard. They averaged 182 kg, which is behind where they should be in terms of target weight, but with the set back they had in August/September the reduced weight is to be expected.
- There is still a large number of weaker commercial calves that will remain on straw for the winter.
- A group of ~30 commercial calves and ~35 FRX calves remain outdoors and are doing well. They will be housed over the next week or so.
- The calves are being fed *ad lib* silage alongside 2 kg of 16% beef grower ration.
- Investigations are still ongoing in relation to the issues experienced with calf health in Johnstown. As usual, a group of FRX calves and a group of beef crossbred commercial calves (~100 in total) will be reared in spring 2021 for commercial purposes, and a new rearing and frequent sampling protocol is being drafted to see if any problems can be pin-pointed during the rearing phase. Additionally, when the reared trial calves come to Johnstown in June 2021, an adjusted protocol for their management upon arrival, feeding at grass, and bi-weekly water and FEC sampling will be conducted, among other adjustments, to try to combat the issues being experienced at grass during their first season.

Grassland Management

- Grass growth rate across the farm was approximately 23 kg DM/ha/day for October.
- The remaining farmyard manure and soiled water was spread on grazed-out paddocks during the first half of the month.
- The average pre-grazing yield for the month on the stocking rate farmlets was 1600 kg DM/ha, however due to the wetter weather, paddocks were not being grazed as tightly, and the post grazing height for the month was 6.5 cm.
- The three paddocks that were reseeded at the end of September had a difficult start with the increased rainfall, but the seeds have struck and a green 'hue' is visible. It will remain to be seen how the clover and herbs will establish.
- The average farm cover on the stocking rate trial was 600 kg DM/ha once the heifers were housed on the 22nd October. A farm cover was taken the following week after closing.

Table 2. Farm cover, 27th October 2020

	Farm cover	Growth/ha	Demand /ha	Grazing area	Silage cut later	Total LU	LU/ha	Days ahead
	Kg DM/ha	Kg DM/ha/day	Kg DM/ha/day	Ha	Ha			
High	604	22	0	15.11	0	0	0	0
Med	736	21	0	16.52	0	0	0	0
Low	649	23	0	18.25	0	0	0	0

Teagasc Dairy Beef Research Programme

Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford

