

Beef Forum 2016: Young Farmers in Beef

Grange, Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre

Teagasc BEEF 2016, Tuesday 5th July, 2016

Venue: *Open Day Forum Marquee*
(No. 24 on BEEF 2016 booklet map)



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Beef Forum 2016: Young Farmers in Beef

Chairperson:

Professor Gerry Boyle, *Teagasc Director*

Speakers:

Alan Kehoe, *Co. Wexford*

Paul Duggan, *Co. Waterford*

Dara Walton, *Co. Kilkenny*

Kieran Henry, *Co. Sligo*

Aisling Molloy, *Co. Offaly*

Discussion Opener:

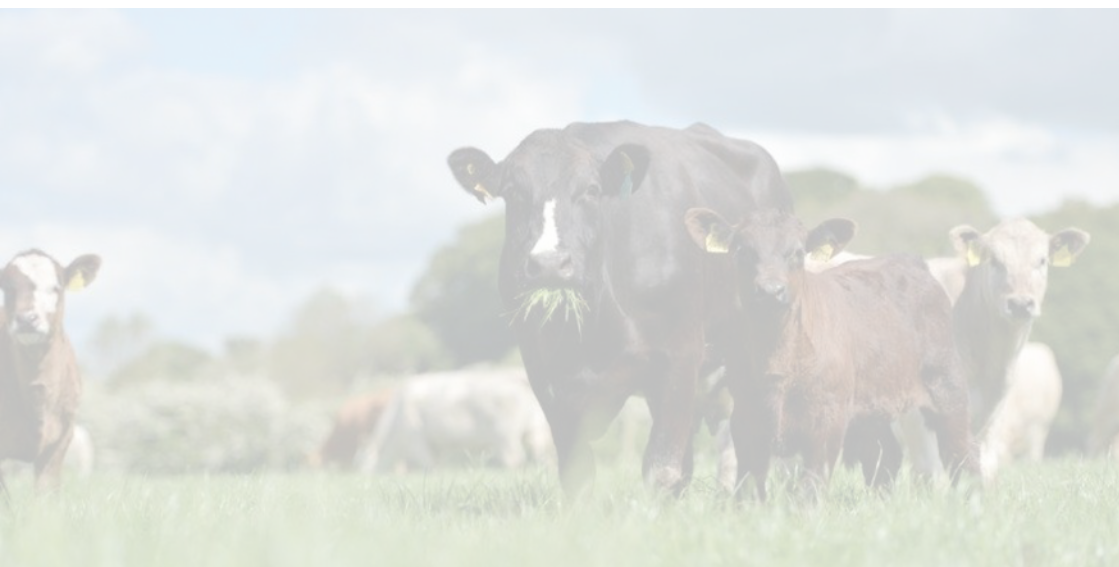
Justin McCarthy, *Editor, Irish Farmers Journal*



AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Table of Contents

Alan Kehoe	6
Paul Duggan	8
Dara Walton.	10
Kieran Henry	12
Aisling Molloy	14
NOTES:	16





Alan Kehoe

Address

Fardystown, Murintown, Co.Wexford.

Education

- Qualified Carpenter.
- FETAC Level 6 Green Cert.

Farming History

- Started farming in 2012 on 40 hectares of grass, all owned.
- Farm previously used for sport horses.
- Reared 25 calves and fattened 20 heifers in the first year.

Brief Description of Current Farming Operations

- Full time farming on 54ha – all in grass.
- Rearing 120 dairy calf to beef – all Friesian steers with the aim to slaughter most at 24 months of age at a carcass weight of 330kg. Some slaughtered off grass at 26 - 27 months.

Farm Details

Stock

- 60 calves reared before Christmas (October to December).
- 60 calves reared in the spring (February and March).

Stocking rate

- Currently at 1.9 LU/ha but increasing as stock numbers increase.

Grass

- Intensive rotational paddock system with permanent and temporary wire. Farmyard in the center of the farm with roadways makes this a simple system.
- Over 50% of the farm has been reseeded in recent years
- Measuring grass with a plate meter and using PastureBase Ireland.

Discussion Group

In a BTAP Discussion Group since 2013, and a Grass Group since 2015, both under Martina Harrington - Teagasc Adviser.

Key Technologies Adopted

Grass - Rotational paddock grazing system put in place. Now grass measuring. Focusing on increased grass utilisation - taking out strong paddocks for silage. Making high quality silage every year.

Soil Fertility - Soil testing to improve soil indexes, spreading lime, P and K.

Weighing - Regularly weighing cattle to monitor their performance.

Teagasc eProfit Monitor - Did up a farm plan with my adviser and currently implementing that plan. Complete a yearly profit monitor to measure financial performance against my farm plan.

My Future Plans

- Aim to increase the stocking rate and the tonnes of beef produced per hectare from the farm.
- Keep reseeding and improving soil fertility.
- Increase grass growth and utilisation further to increase stocking rate and output.
- Do a yearly herd health plan.
- Need to increase housing facilities. Awaiting TAMS grant approval to build an 8 span slatted unit.



Paul Duggan

Address

Coolfin, Portlaw, Co Waterford.

Education

- Certificate in Agriculture.

Farming History

- Suckler farming in partnership with parents John & Anne.
- Started with 30 suckler cows after college.
- Dovea AI technician for four years.
- Worked on Kildalton farm for two years.

Brief Description of Current Farming Operations

- 145 suckler cow herd on 82 ha.
- Selling weanlings and yearlings.
- 60 – 70% sold on live export market.
- Bull calves sold at ten months of age – average weight 410 kg (sold at €2.41/kg in 2016).
- Heifer calves sold at average weight 380 kg (sold at €2.40/ kg in 2015).

Farm Details

Stocking rate

- Currently 2.1 LU/ha.

Herd

- 60 autumn and 85 spring calving suckler cows.
- Over 80 cows are 4 and 5 star on the replacement index.
- Most of the cows are Limousin crosses bred to Belgian Blue and Limousin bulls.
- AI used on 45 spring calving cows (Sultan, Adajio & Serpentine, Casimir).

Grass

- Rotational grazing system in place.
- Big emphasis on having clover in the swards.

Key Technologies Adopted

Breeding

- All replacement heifers are bought in.
- Recently purchased two Limousin bulls that both have 5 stars.
- All home reared heifers are calved at 24 months of age.

Teagasc eProfit Monitor - completed every year to measure output and costs.

Discussion Group – In a beef discussion group for a number of years. Now joined a new KT Beef group (with Teagasc – Austin Flavin).

ICBF Herdplus – Use the various reports.

Weighing Scales – Monitor performance of stock regularly.

Grass – A rotational grazing system is in place. Often take out paddocks to maintain grass quality. Lot of reseeding done in recent years.

Breeding – AI used on a proportion of the cows every year.

My Future Plans

- Plan to put in more road ways to increase flexibility of grassland management.
- Aim to increase cow numbers to 150.
- Extra housing is needed –planning permission has been received for a new six span slatted shed.
- Looking at rearing calves – will start with buying in 30 calves.



Dara Walton

Address

Cappagh, Callan, Co Kilkenny.

Education

- Degree in Agricultural Science.

Farming History

- Acquired herd number in 2008 on 8 ha of owned land and 36 ha leased land from his father. Calved down 55 heifers in the first year.

Brief Description of Current Farming Operations

- 60 spring calving suckler cows calving from late January to end of March.
- Also purchasing 45 – 50 spring born Friesian bull calves rearing to steer beef.
- Farming on his own, but shares machinery with his brother (dairy farmer).
- Farming 44 ha (home), and 12 ha (away) for three cut silage.

Farm Details

Herd

- 60 continental cross cows ran in two groups of 30 each.
- Used A.I. on one group, and a Charolais bull on the other group, (then let this Charolais bull to the A.I. group to pick up on the few that were not in calf).
- Also used Simmental, Parthenaise and Limousin A.I. on 10 heifers.

Stocking rate

- Stocked at 2.25 LU/ha.
- With the farm almost fully reseeded there is scope to go to 2.7 LU/ha and above.

Key Technologies Adopted

Grass

- Intensive paddock system with permanent and temporary wires, water troughs and roadways.
- Farm is almost fully reseeded.
- Has commenced grass measuring with a plate meter and using PastureBase Ireland.

Discussion Group:

- Was in a BTAP Discussion Group for the last few years
- Has now joined the Mid Kilkenny K.T. Suckler Discussion Group (Terry Carroll-Teagasc Adviser).

Grass – Has done a lot of grass reseeding and put in short duration paddocks. Now grass measuring (eyeballing previously and using a platometer now). Also making high quality silage every year.

Soil Fertility - Soil tested the whole farm and applied lime, P and K.

Teagasc eProfit Monitor – Completes a yearly Profit Monitor.

Weighing – Regularly weighs the stock to assess performance.

My Future Plans

- Push grass growth and utilisation further to produce more tonnes of quality beef from the land available.



Kieran Henry

Address

Toberscarden, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo.

Education

- Qualified carpenter national crafts certificate.

Farming History

- Farms 45 hectares.
- Pedigree Limousin breeder and contract-rearer (who commenced farming in 2011).
- Farms in partnership with his wife Caroline.

Brief Description of Current Farming Operations

- 35 autumn calving pedigree Limousin cows calving from mid-August to mid October.
- 100% AI usage with emphasis on the replacement index to sell bulls with high replacement values to commercial suckler farmers.
- Contract rearing cattle from suckler and dairy herds over the grazing season.

Farm Details

Herd

- Uses Limousin AI sires with high replacement index values.
- Increased the number of dairy heifers contract reared, planning to keep heifers from 2 months of age to 22 months then return to herd of origin prior to calving. Currently contract rearing 35 animals.
- High herd health status (Limo Leader Herd Health Scheme).

Stocking rate

- Stocking rate is currently low at 1.1 LU/ha.
- Plan to increase to 1.8 LU/ha.

Grass

- Introduced water troughs and grazing paddocks to improve grassland management.

Key Technologies Adopted

Discussion Group

- In a KT Beef Group (Tom Coll – Teagasc Adviser).

Grass – Has improved grassland management by introducing more water troughs and putting in place a rotational grazing system. Now measuring grass and using PastureBase Ireland. Silage quality has improved significantly.

Breeding – Uses ICBF HerdPlus for cow and bull selection, recording birth data, weights, etc.

Weighing – Purchased a weighing scales and all cattle are weighed regularly during the year to ensure pre-set growth targets are met.

Teagasc eProfit Monitor – Annual profit monitors and budgets are completed early in the year.

My Future Plans

- Establish a 30 cow compact spring calving herd calving January to March selling high quality weanlings in November.
- Produce pedigree bulls and heifers with high replacement index values.
- Establish a long term contract with a dairy herd rearing replacement heifers.
- Build a new shed for the pedigree herd under TAMS 2 which will free up existing sheds to house contract reared stock over the winter period.



Aisling Molloy

Address

Puttaghaun, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

Education

- Degree in Agricultural Science (Animal Science).
- Currently undertaking a Masters in Agricultural Science.

Farming History

- Farms part-time with her father Eddie.
- Farm in family for 5 generations.
- Traditionally livestock, tillage and contracting.
- Suckling system began in 2008.

Brief Description of Current Farming Operations

- 37 hectares.
- Tillage crops grown include winter and spring barley (on an out-farm).
- 20 spring calving suckler cows on home farm.
- 70% of Cows are 4 and 5 star on the replacement index.
- 100% AI used, breeding own replacements.
- Sell weanlings in October/November in local mart.
- Tradition of hay making supplying a strong local market.

Farm Details

Herd

- Mainly continental cross cows, with some Hereford and Angus.
- Replacements retained from top cows and bred to Limousin or Simmental AI sires which are 5 star on the replacement index.
- Remaining cows bred to 5 star terminal Limousin AI sires.

Stocking rate

- Currently 1.6 LU/ha but have plans in place to increase suckler cow numbers to 30 and the stocking rate will increase to 2.0 LU/ha as a result.

Key Technologies Adopted

Grass

- Rotational grazing system with 3 to 4 day grazing paddocks.
- Grass is measured each week and data is entered on PastureBase Ireland.
- Clover is maintained in swards with tight grazing
- Surplus grass is baled as silage.
- The farm has huge potential to grow more grass as livestock numbers and demand increase.

Breeding – Use restricted suckling where calves are separated from cows at approximately one week old and allowed to suckle twice daily for 4-6 weeks. Cows start cycling earlier and it helps reduce the calving interval significantly. Cows are tail painted weekly and monitored 3 - 4 times per day for signs of heat so that AI can be used. 30 days after the breeding season ends cows are scanned.

Weighing calves – Calves are weighed twice during the grazing season and just before weaning. Weights are checked against target daily live weight gain.

ICBF Herdplus – Reports are used to make breeding and culling decisions. The Eurostar indexes are very useful when choosing cows to breed replacements from.

Grass – Lime and fertiliser are spread based on soil sample results. Grass is measured on a weekly basis and 3 to 4 day grazing paddocks are set up.

Teagasc eProfit Monitor – Hugely beneficial in measuring farm output and monitoring costs.

My Future Plans

- Increase suckler cow numbers to 30 by 2018.
- Keep all 4 and 5 star replacement index heifers.
- Breed surplus heifers to an easy calving AI bull and sell incalf as replacement heifers the following summer/ autumn.
- Tighten calving spread and reduce calving interval further.
- Take soil samples and address soil fertility issues.
- Invest in grassland reseeding to match increased demand.
- Join Beef KT group and GLAS. This source of funds will be used to invest in more fencing, water supply and grassland reseeding.

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Notes

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