

BEEF

September 2020

Beef Finisher Payment deadline

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The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) launched the Beef Finisher Payment (BFP) in August. Any bovines over eight months old that were slaughtered between February 1 and June 12, 2020 inclusive, may be eligible for a payment of up to €100 per head. There is an upper limit of 100 animals per farm that can be eligible for payment but with partnerships a multiplier may apply. Beef and dairy farmers have until September 9, 2020 to apply for the scheme and this can only be done through the DAFM agfood.ie online system. Unlike with the previous similar Beef Exceptional Aid Measure (BEAM) scheme, there is no requirement with this scheme to reduce stock numbers. If you sold stock through a mart (or privately) in the relevant time period and they were subsequently slaughtered within 30 days in the Republic of Ireland, you may also be eligible for



Deadline for the Beef Finisher Payment, worth €100 per animal, is September 9.

the payment. All participants in the scheme will need to be members of the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Scheme and those who are not will have up to September 30 to apply. Your Teagasc advisor can complete the online application for the BFP for you but they would need your permission to complete the process and remember you only have until September 9.

Build grass covers

September is the last month you have to build grass covers and extend your grazing rotation length in order to set your farm up for the last grazing rotation in October and November. If you don't have a reasonable bank of grass saved up by the end of the month, your last rotation could end up being very short and you will have to house all of your stock much sooner than you would like to. September 15 is the last day you can spread nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) fertilisers. The sooner any planned fertiliser applications are spread the better, as growth rates tend to decline as the month progresses. No more topping or surplus silage cutting should take place. Suckler cows being weaned can be restricted to allow covers to build, especially if they are already in good body condition. Stock being finished off grass should be supplemented with meal, which will reduce



Extend your grazing rotation by building grass covers in September.

their demand for grass. Young calves in dairy calf-to-beef systems should be fed meal at grass from now until housing. Where grass supply is getting tight, consider housing some stock to allow other cattle to remain outdoors for an extended period. The target going into October and the last grazing rotation should be to have at least 35 days of grass ahead of stock. If weather conditions allow it, this would mean that some stock will be grazing until November.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Get winter ready

From mid September onwards is the ideal time to focus on getting winter ready. In recent years, storms, flooding, snow and ice have become more frequent in winter. Now is the time to do winter-ready maintenance around the farm. For example, check for buildings or trees that could collapse. Check your supplies, e.g., anti-slip grit, protective clothing and equipment, torch batteries and first-aid boxes. Make sure to have your emergency contacts up to date and accessible and that your Eircode is displayed in a prominent place. Further



Be winter ready.

information on getting winter ready is available on the health and safety section of the Teagasc website.



Teagasc Green Acres virtual farm walk



Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we cannot hold farm walks at the moment. However, on Thursday, September 10 we will be holding a virtual farm walk on the Teagasc Green Acres farm of Martin Connolly in Castleplunket, Co. Roscommon. Martin farms 60ha and buys 120 Friesian calves each year, finishing them as bulls. The land type is slightly heavy in nature and the farm is split up into six different blocks. Since joining the programme in the spring of 2019, Martin has been working hard on improving his profitability through two main avenues. The first is to improve the weight gain of his calves over the first year of their lives so that heavier carcass weights can be achieved down the line. The second is to reduce the meal feeding costs substantially during the winter and finishing stages through improving the silage quality on the farm.

Throughout September 10, we will be releasing a number of videos through the Teagasc and *AgriLand* online digital platforms that will explain the improvements that have been made



Martin Connolly, Teagasc Green Acres farmer.

on the Connolly farm over the last 18 months. At 7.00pm there will be a discussion with Martin and a number of Teagasc experts covering all of the different topics. At any stage during the day you can have your questions answered by posting them on the TeagascBeef Facebook or Twitter accounts.

Lime – the double dividend

Now is the ideal time to take fresh soil samples and identify how much lime is required for specific parts of your farm. Lime has many functions in the soil, from controlling soil acidity, improving soil drainage to increasing the availability of major plant nutrients such as nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K) and sulphur (S). For example, soils will release up to 80kg N per ha annually when the soil pH is maintained at the optimum pH 6.3. In

addition, grass production will increase by 10-15%, reducing the need for imported feed sources annually. Lime offers a double dividend in reduced chemical N requirements while growing additional grass annually at least cost. The autumn is a great time to apply lime as it will have the winter period to work and soils will be primed for the springtime. Apply lime now based on soil test result recommendations and don't apply any more than 7.5 tonnes per ha (3 tonnes per acre) in a single application.

RESEARCH UPDATE



Grange calf-to-beef system

NICKY BYRNE and DONALL FAHY, AGRIC, Teagasc, Grange, Dunsany, Co. Meath report on first-year results from the Teagasc Grange dairy calf-to-beef system.

The focus of the current study is to compare the performance of three dairy-beef genetic groups, which consist of male Holstein Friesian (HF) and two Angus (AAX) groups, representing the main calf breeds coming from the dairy herd. The HF group are the progeny of the top four Economic Breeding Index (EBI) sires, while the two AAX groups are the progeny of AA sires divergent in genetic merit for carcass weight and conformation. The effect of early calf nutrition on lifetime performance was also evaluated, with half of the three groups reared on either four or eight litres of milk replacer/day. **Table 1** presents the animal performance for year 1 of the study, i.e., the calves born in 2018. There was no difference in the performance of the calves reared on either four or eight litres of milk replacer/day. The calves on four litres per day consumed 20kg less milk replacer during the rearing phase and consumed 25kg more concentrates during that period. Lifetime concentrate input was 740kg, 640kg and 635kg, respectively for the HF, high AAX and low AAX animal groups. Age at slaughter was 19 days greater for the HF compared to the two AAX groups. Kill-out percentage was highest for the high AAX (52%), lowest for HF (50%), and intermediate for the low AAX (51%), resulting in an 8.5kg carcass weight

difference between the HF and AAX groups, although this was not statistically significant. Carcass conformation was highest for the high AAX (5.0; equating to O=), lowest for the HF (3.5; equating to O-/P+), and intermediate for the low AAX (4.6; equating to O=). Carcass value differences were small. The carcass value for the high AAX was highest (€1,081), lowest for the HF (€1,022), and intermediate for the low AAX (€1,047). The finishing period for the HF group was greater than for the two AAX groups, 81 versus 61 days, respectively. Calves born earlier in the spring had a distinct advantage, as for every week earlier they were born carcass yield increased by 3.5kg.

Table 1: Carcass performance of 2018-born steers across three dairy-beef genetic groups.

Carcass/slaughter performance	HF	High AAX	Low AAX
Age at slaughter (days)	680	660	662
Slaughter liveweight (kg)	615	578	573
Carcass weight (kg)	305	300	293
Kill-out (%)	49.7	52.0	51.0
Carcass conformation (1-15)	3.5 (O-)	5.0 (O=)	4.6 (O=)
Carcass fat (1-15)	8.6 (3+)	8.9 (3+)	9.0 (3+)
Carcass value*	€1,022	€1,081	€1,047

*Carcass value is based on a base price of €3.55/kg on the QPS grid; €0.20/kg quality assurance payment and €0.10/kg breed bonus.