

ENVIRONMENT

October 2020

Dates for your diary

Edited by
Catherine Keena,
Countryside Management Specialist

All farmers

- ▶ Last date for spreading slurry is midnight October 14;
- ▶ last date for spreading farmyard manure (FYM) is midnight October 31; and,
- ▶ from January 1, 2021 all roadways (used for animals and machinery) can no longer have run-off/sediment loss to waters (streams, dry drains, etc.). These roads are to be sloped away from waters or clay banks/bunds put in place to prevent run-off.

Derogation farmers

Derogation farmers need to have a plan in place for hedges, as you will have to either:

- ▶ leave at least one mature whitethorn/blackthorn tree every 300m of hedgerow; or,
- ▶ maintain hedgerows on a minimum three-year cycle. Cutting annually stops the hedgerow flowering and fruiting.

Contact your Teagasc advisor if required to ensure you have complied with your nutrient management plan. Start gathering receipts for lime, slurry spread using low-emission slurry spreading (LESS), and fertiliser receipts for the year, as you will have to submit records of these at year end.

Farmers >170kg N/ha

For all farmers where the grassland stocking rate is >170kg nitrogen (N)/ha, from January 1, 2021 the following measures apply on your farm.

This is where your total organic N produced on the holding is spread over your grassland area only:

- ▶ all water troughs to be moved 20m away from waters; and,
- ▶ prevention of bovine access to watercourses – can't access or drink from watercourses.

Hedge cutting – for hedges fit for birds and bees



MANAGEMENT OF THREE HEDGE TYPES



1. Hedge with a dense base

Side trim to a triangular profile from a wide base, leaving the peak as high as possible and still cutting the growing point, while retaining occasional thorn tree saplings to allow them to grow up into mature thorn trees, which provide fruit for birds and flowers for bees.



2. Relict hedge or treeline or strip of woodland:

- ▶ leave alone;
- ▶ fence off; and,
- ▶ side trim if necessary.



3. Escaped hedge:

- ▶ side trim;
- ▶ do not top; and,
- ▶ can be rejuvenated by laying or coppicing at ground level.

MESSAGE FROM ASSAP

Autumn management of nutrients

Autumn is a critical time of the year for nutrient and sediment loss to waters. Play your part in reducing the losses of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and sediment to your local streams by:

- applying remaining slurry or farmyard manure (FYM) as soon as possible;
- avoiding spreading on areas with high connectivity to watercourses to retain nutrients in the field and reduce the risk of loss through overland flow;
- applying at less than 2,000 gallons per acre for slurry and less than 10 tonnes/acre for FYM;
- checking the weather forecast, as heavy rain will wash nutrients into waters where soils become saturated;
- not locating supplementary feeding points in areas with connectivity to watercourses; and,
- not locating supplementary feeding



A catchment scientist from the Local Authorities Waters Programme (LAWPRO) and an advisor from the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP) working in collaboration assessing water quality in a priority area for action.

points within 20m of surface water or on bare rock.

Nutrients of concern to water quality are P and N and each is lost to waters in different ways. Where soils have a high clay content or are 'heavy' soils that get saturated, water is slow to percolate through the soil. Instead it flows overland, bringing with it plant-available P into watercourses. P binds tightly

to soil and when water flows over the surface of fields it brings with it soil or sediment with P attached to these particles into watercourses. Where soils are more free-draining or are 'light' soils, N can be leached to ground water and streams. N does not bind tightly to soil and where excess N is applied over crop requirement, this can be leached through the soil by heavy rainfall.

EIP UPDATE

MacGillycuddy Reeks EIP in action

Three different treatment options are available to farmers in the project to treat bracken, depending on the constraints of the site:

- targeted spraying with a knapsack (a buffer zone of 5m is maintained near watercourses) as much of the land is rocky and not suitable for treatment with boom sprayers;
- cutting unsprayed areas along watercourses twice during the growing season; and,
- trampling with suitable cattle breeds such as Droimeann, Kerry or Dexter. Cattle are also used to control grazing in areas with purple moor grass and gorse.

Rhododendron is a large perennial evergreen shrub. It is non-native and has become invasive in the MacGillycuddy Reeks. It is an aggressive coloniser, which can form dense thickets, shading out native flora and leading to the loss of grazing. It is poisonous to cattle, sheep and deer. The project uses the following control methods for rhododendron:

1. Stem treatment for younger plants: this involves using a hatchet to make shallow downward cuts in the bark approximately 2-3cm apart around the base of the trunk and applying the herbicide Roundup Biactive with blue marker dye to the exposed bark. It is vital to make the cuts below the last branch to ensure the glyphosate gets to all areas of the plant. The number of cuts required will depend on the thickness of the plant. The marker



*Top: Bracken. Above left: Rhododendron.
Bottom right: Droimeann cattle.*

dye is to help identify plants treated. Results of treatment are seen quickly during growing season, although treatment can be carried out all year round, except in extremely wet weather, when there is the possibility of the glyphosate washing off the plant.

2. Direct stump treatment: this method is used for dense mature thickets, when the plant is cut as close to the ground as possible and then treated with herbicide.

The MacGillycuddy Reeks European Innovation Partnership (EIP) project is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and administered by South Kerry Partnership.