Teagasc Advisory Newsletter

BEEF

June 2021

BDGP warning

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A penalty of 60 - 100% will apply if you miss the deadline (June 30) for the bull/AI requirement.

For anyone who added the extra year to Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP I) in 2021 or those that entered BDGP II in 2017, you must meet the requirements below by June 30.

- If using a stock bull, at least one animal on the holding on June 30 must have been a genotyped 4 or 5 star bull, on either the Terminal or Replacement Index (on a within or across breed basis) at the time of purchase.
- If renting in bulls for breeding, you must use bulls that are 4 or 5 star on either the Terminal or Replacement Index (on a within or across breed basis). You must also inform the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) that you are leasing a bull. All movements of bulls for breeding between holdings must be notified to the Animal Identification and Movement (AIM) system and comply with animal health and movement legislation, specifically, these bulls must have cleared a pre-movement test for TB and BVD.
- If using artificial insemination (AI), at least 80% of the AI used must be from 4 or 5 star bulls on either the Terminal or Replacement Index (on a within or across breed basis).
- If you use both a bull and AI you must meet the requirements of both.

The penalty for not meeting these requirements is 100% for the 2021 BDGP rollover scheme and 60% for people who entered BDGP II in 2017.

Switching from a stock bull to AI

If you used a stock bull in 2020 and are using AI this spring, to avoid a penalty you need to notify the DAFM (Beefschemes@agriculture.gov.ie) as they will see no stock bull on June 30 and no AI born progeny. If in doubt, contact your Teagasc advisor.

Teagasc
Agriculture and Food Development Authority

Fertilising second-cut grass silage

Second-cut silage is planned on many farms to replenish silage reserves for the coming winter. This crop tends to be lower yielding compared to first-cut silage. Where first cut has been taken, it is important that second-cut crops are fertilised adequately to ensure a good yield of grass.

Cattle slurry may not have been applied to first-cut silage crops due to heavy grass covers and weather conditions this spring. Aim to apply cattle slurry after first-cut silage to replenish the soil phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) that was removed. Where a second cut of silage is planned, the level of nitrogen (N) that cattle slurry can supply depends on application techniques. Low emission slurry application increases the recovery of N (+3 units/1,000 gals), nutrients are applied more precisely across the spread width and grass contamination with manures is significantly reduced. Maximise cattle slurry application at this time of the year so that slurry tanks are emptied before next winter.

Fertilise second-cut grass silage based on crop yield potential. **Table 1** shows the fertiliser requirements based on a grass dry matter yield of 2t to 4t DM/ha (*4t to 8t fresh grass/ac*). Suggested fertiliser programmes are shown with and without cattle slurry at various rates depending on grass yield.

Don't forget sulphur (S): for second-cut silage crops, apply 10-15kg S/ha per cut.

Table 1: Second-cut silage N, P and K req. (off-takes)[3,4] Based on grass yield and fertiliser programmes

Grass yield (ton DM/ha)[2]	N kg/ha (units/ac)	P kg/ha (units/ac)	K kg/ha (units/ac)	S kg/ha (units/ac)	Fertiliser options[1]	
					No slurry[1]	Cattle slurry gal/ac[6]
2 (4t/ac fresh grass)[5]	50 (40)	8 (6)	50 (40)	8 (6)	2 bags/ac 15-3-20 + S 0.2 bag/ac ProUrea 46	1,500gals/ac 0.8 bags/ac ProUrea +S
3 (6t/ac fresh grass)[5]	75 (60)	12 (10)	75 (60)	12 (10)	3 bags/ac 15-3-20 + S 0.3 bag/ac ProUrea 46	2,000gals/ac 1.2 bags/ac ProUrea+S
4 (8t/ac fresh grass)[5]	100 (80)	16 (13)	100 (80)	15 (12)	4 bags/ac 15-3-20 + S 0.45 bag/ac ProUrea 46	2,500gals/ac 1.6 bags/ac ProUrea+S

1 Protected urea (urea 46% N) or (urea 40% + 6% + NBPT).
2 Apply 4kg P and 25kg K per tonne of grass dry matter (DM).
3 N, P and K advice for crop off takes based on grass DM yield at harvest time.
4 Apply additional P and K for soil fertility build up after grass harvest. Refer to Teagasc Green Book for specific rates.
5 Fresh grass @ 20% DM.
6 Slurry applied with low emission applicator.

Green Acres – calf data

Sourcing and purchasing the correct calf at an appropriate price is critical to the success of calf to beef systems. An over-expensive outlay on day one of the production cycle can add pressure in terms of making a margin at slaughter.

With three years' data of spring calf purchases now recorded on the Teagasc Green Acres calf to beef farms, we can take a closer look at trends in both calf prices and calf type being bought.

In percentage terms, dairy-bred males accounted for 68% of all calves purchased, while early-maturing males and females represented 8% and 12%, respectively of total calf numbers. On account of higher calf purchase costs, the trend witnessed last year where Holstein Friesians were preferred to early-maturing animals has continued. In terms of calf prices, increases were witnessed across all categories of animal. The Holstein Friesian calf price increased by €11/head, while rises of €35-64/head were witnessed for early-maturing males. Only small price rises were witnessed in the continental category, as only two farmers – who've strong relationships built with calf suppliers – are engaged in purchasing these animals in large numbers.

Table 2: Average calf purchase price on the Teagasc Green Acres farms

	2019 Age days	2020 Age days	2021 Age days	2020 vs 2021
		Bulls		
HOFR	€90 24	€64 23	€75 24	+€11
AA	€151 25	€122 21	€186 18	+€64
HE	€175 27	€149 21	€184 19	+€35
Cont.	€232 23	€220 22	€229 18	+€9
		Heifers		
AA	€131 23	€129 24	€175 21	+€46
HE	€165 22	€139 24	€180 23	+€41
Cont.	€227 21	€216 20	€231 20	+€15

HEALTH & SAFETY

Keep yourself and children safe

Farm workplace deaths have reduced in the four months to April 2021, with two fatalities reported. It is likely that there are more persons available to assist with farm work due to the Covid-19 lockdown, which may have helped with the injury reduction. However, as the economy reopens and as farm risks rise during the busy summer months from June to August, extra safety vigilance is needed from now on. Farmer vehicle knockdowns and falling from heights are major causes of deaths during these months. Last year saw an increase in childhood farm workplace fatalities, so extra vigilance is especially needed in this area. This month we include a children's safety newsletter. Please check in on the use of this newsletter by children and discuss farm safety positively with them. Children model their safety behaviour on adults, so a good example and leadership are vital to gain culture change with farm safety. Further information can be obtained on the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and Teagasc websites.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Grass-fed suckler beef

Edward G. O'Riordan, Peter Doyle, Mark McGee and Aidan Moloney of the Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc, Grange examined yearling performance at pasture in 2020 at Grange.

Yearlings at Teagasc, Grange.

Spring-born suckler steers and heifer yearlings, out of both early- and late-maturing sires, were turned out to pasture on April 6 and rotationally grazed, on perennial ryegrass dominant swards (over twenty years old) for 207 days. During the previous winter they were offered solely high dry matter digestibility (DMD) grass silage (750g/kg) supplemented with minerals and vitamins and the daily live weight gain recorded during the winter was 0.5kg. At pasture, steers gained 194kg and heifers gained 185kg live weight, equating to an average daily live weight gain of 0.94kg and 0.89kg, respectively. Steers were 8kg heavier than heifers at the start of the grazing season (365 vs 357kg), and this difference increased to 17kg live weight by the end of the season. Highest daily live weight gains were observed during the first two months at pasture (1.36kg for steers and 1.35kg for heifers), and this declined to 0.81kg and 0.74kg, for steers and heifers, respectively, for the remainder of the season.

At turnout to pasture in spring, the stocking rate was approximately 2,500kg live weight per hectare (kg LW/ha) on the grazing area, which increased as the animals got heavier, and reached a peak of approximately 3,250kg LW/ha in mid-late June. First- and second-cut silage aftermaths were subsequently introduced to the grazing rotation (to coincide with the seasonal decline in grass growth, and thus grass supply), resulting in a gradual reduction in grazing 'pressure' to approximately 2,000kg LW/ha by housing time, on October 30. Grass supply, as measured by 'days ahead' decreased from turnout until late-June and dropped to as low as eight days (drought effects) before rapidly recovering once rain arrived. Days ahead gradually increased to 20 by late-August/early-September, briefly reaching a peak of 30 for one week before finally dropped to ~10 days ahead by late-October.

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