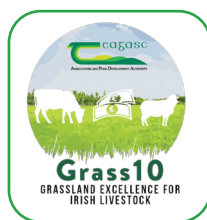


# BEEF

March 2021

## Grass10 – getting out to grass

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Teagasc research shows that every day at grass in the springtime is worth €2 per livestock unit. The goal of spring grazing is to get cattle to grass as many days as possible and

set the farm up for the summer. Spring is a time with huge potential to increase profit, if farms and farmers are set up to take advantage of it. Here are a few steps to help you achieve this:

1. Split the farm into three – graze one-third by early March, two-thirds by St Patrick's Day and aim to have the farm fully grazed by April 10-15. (Heavy farms should reach these targets 10-14 days later.) Work out the target area to graze each week.
2. Choose which paddocks to graze first, second and last. The first paddocks grazed should be the fastest growing, have 7-8cm of grass, and be drier with good access. Graze silage

ground in the second third (mid to late March), and wetter paddocks last.

3. Choose the stock to graze. Pick a bunch of lighter animals to get out to graze first. These will have the best chance of grazing paddocks while avoiding damaging them. Work out if they will graze the target area each week. You may need to let out more stock depending on this.
4. Use strip-wires to move cattle daily and back fence. This avoids doing damage to paddocks.
5. Remember cattle can go in and out as weather changes. If ground conditions are poor, bring stock back inside, but try to get them out again as soon as possible.

It can be challenging but you will earn more for your effort. Don't limit yourself by your land type or compare yourself to others. Focus on improving your own farm and performance year to year. Best of luck!

## Schemes update

This month will see the opening of another year of the Beef Environmental Efficiency Programme-Suckler (BEEP-S) for suckler farmers. Conditions of the programme will be broadly similar to last year, where weighing of the cow and unweaned calf on the same day will form the basis of the programme. You can then select to meal feed or vaccinate calves and you will once again have to take faecal samples from suckler cows. All indications suggest that payment rates will be broadly similar to last year, provided it is not over subscribed. Applications will be open on your online Agfood account.

There will also be a dairy calf scheme piloted this year in tandem with BEEP-S, where farmers will be asked to weigh and record dairy-bred



*Two schemes under the BSEP are available to farmers this year.*

calf weights. Applications will again be through Agfood online and payment will be made up to a maximum of 20 calves, with a reported payment of €20 per calf. Both programmes will come under the Beef Sector Efficiency Programme (BSEP).

## HEALTH & SAFETY

### Keep organised to keep safe

Work organisation is crucial in March when the workload peaks. Isolate cows when treating their calves. A 'bawl' from the calf can cause the cow to charge with the force of a juggernaut. Workload occurs around the clock and staying organised is crucial. Keep the workplace tidy to prevent trips and falls, use equipment in a safe manner, and take the weight off your shoulders by using equipment such as wheeled devices. Have protective equipment such as gloves and disinfectant at the ready to prevent infection. Self care is vital at this time of year. Getting adequate rest is essential to prevent becoming overtired. Plan and organise meals in advance to



*Beware of cow attack.*

prevent snacking and poor diet. Overall, your alertness and behaviour can prevent injuries and ill health at this busy time.

## The Beef Edge podcast

With calving season underway, tune into The Beef Edge weekly beef podcast to hear top tips from vet Tommy Heffernan on calving the cow and caring for the newborn calf. Mark Plunkett, Teagasc specialist gives advice on how to reduce your fertiliser costs in 2021. If you have a beef suckling-to-finishing system, suckler farmer James Madigan from Co. Kilkenny gives his top tips and advice on how he manages his system. With the Basic Payment Scheme online system open, tune in



to hear Teagasc's James McDonnell for all you need to know in advance of your appointment. Tune in at: [www.teagasc.ie/thebeefedge](http://www.teagasc.ie/thebeefedge).

## Teagasc Green Acres slaughter performance 2020

Having a full year's slaughter data for 2020 to look back on and digest makes this a good time to think about how last year's slaughter performance is going to impact on the decisions you make when purchasing calves this spring, before the rush of sourcing and rearing starts. The participants in the Teagasc Green Acres programme who rear spring-born calves are currently assessing this on an individual basis to plan the best course of action for the spring ahead. Decisions they make now with regard to the breed, gender, age, price and genetic



potential of the calves they purchase will have a large bearing on the age at slaughter, carcass weight and grade, price received and the cost of production associated with these animals. The average slaughter performance for the different categories of animals killed in 2020 as part of the Green Acres programme can be seen in **Table 1**.

Having a clear picture of the carcass weights and grades you expect to get from the calves available for purchase, as well as knowing what it will cost you to get them through to sale, are the two most important factors to be mindful of when deciding what to buy and what you are willing to pay.

**Table 1: Teagasc Green Acres slaughter performance 2020.**

Animal type	Age (months)	Carcass weight (kg)	Carcass grade	Carcass fat score	Price €/kg carcass weight
Holstein Friesian steers	27	325	O-	3=	3.48
Holstein Friesian bulls	22	320	O=	2+	3.45
Angus steers	25	320	O=/O+	3+	3.83
Hereford steers	25	315	O=	3+	3.69
Angus heifers	24	265	O=	3+	3.74
Hereford heifers	23	261	O+	4-/4=	3.77

## RESEARCH UPDATE



### Importance of milk yield in suckler cows

MARK McGEE and PAUL CROSSON of Teagasc Grange, Co. Meath report on getting the most growth out of calves to weaning from milk and pasture.



*Pre-weaning calf growth should come mostly from milk and grazing.*

Calf daily liveweight gain to weaning is a key performance factor underpinning profitability of suckler calf-to-weanling production systems. Teagasc research has shown that where calf pre-weaning performance was reduced from 1.25kg to 1.05kg per day, an €86 reduction in net margin per cow occurred. This pre-weaning calf performance, however, must be achieved cost effectively and should be predominantly derived from the dam's milk and grazed pasture. A recent analysis of experiments carried out at Teagasc Grange and elsewhere, compared the effect of cow genotype (i.e., 'dairy x beef' vs 'beef x beef' and 'early-maturing' vs 'late-maturing' breed types) and cow parity on suckler cow milk production and calf performance to weaning in grass-based systems. The analysis showed that dairy x beef and late-maturing genotype cows had 35% (8.6kg vs 6.4kg) and 21% (8.2kg vs. 6.8kg) higher daily milk yield, and ultimately weaned 14kg and 20kg heavier calves at

weaning (210-day adjusted) compared to beef x beef and early-maturing genotype cows, respectively. Lactation curve persistency was better for beef x beef and early-maturing genotype cows compared to dairy x beef and late-maturing genotype cows, respectively. The calf daily growth response per kg additional daily milk yield was 47g, 53g, 51g, and 55g for dairy x beef, beef x beef, early-maturing and late-maturing cow genotypes, respectively. Mature cows produced a 15% higher milk yield, delivered 3.6kg heavier calves at birth and weaned 13kg heavier calves at weaning (210-day adjusted) than first calvers. Given that cow milk yield is a primary driver of calf pre-weaning gain and profitability within calf-to-weanling systems, in practical terms, we should be selecting cow genotypes with good milk production and selecting sires with a high genetic potential for daughter milk yield.