

DAIRY

November 2021

Be sure to leave enough grass for spring

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At this time of year, it is tempting to 'steal' a few days of extra grazing if the weather is good. It seems to shorten the winter after all. However, the most important principle now is to leave enough for early spring grazing. Grass growth has slowed greatly, so recovery will be small – when it's gone, it's gone! Why is this important? You earn 1.5 times more from a day's grazing in the spring than in autumn and there needs to be a plentiful supply of grass available for this to happen. Our advice is to walk the farm to ensure average farm cover (AFC) is on track to reach the closing AFC targets (see **Table 1**). For drier farms, and those

Table 1: Closing AFC targets for December 1 based on stocking rate.

Stocking rate LU/ha	AFC DM/ha	Covers on strongest paddocks DM/ha
2.5	600kg	1,200-1,300kg
3.0	650-700kg	1,400-1,500kg
3.5	700-750kg	1,600-1,700kg

with an early calving date and high calving rate, these targets could be increased slightly. Do not be tempted to re-graze or continue to graze paddocks unless you are well ahead of target.

Farm mapping

PastureBase now has a farm mapping tool, which makes it very easy for all farmers to map their own farm. If getting better results from grass is your goal for next year, you can register with PastureBase Ireland to create a farm profile. A great starting point for grazing season 2022!

Housing checks for November

As farms move into the closed period for slurry spreading, it is very important that no clean water from yards or roofs is getting into slatted tanks. Check all gutters, downpipes and gullies to make sure they are clean and that water is being diverted as required.

As the workload reduces on most farms, now is the time to start planning for next year's calving season. Do an audit on your calf housing and calving facilities. A calf requires a minimum of 1.7m² lying space in your calf-rearing facility. A

compact calving herd (90% six-week calving rate) holding calves for an average of four weeks at peak will have 70-80% of total calves on farm at the one time. If you do not have the required space on farm to hold the calves, investigate alternative options like use of straw sheds or hutches to increase your calf-rearing facilities at peak.

For calving facilities we recommend having space for 10% of your herd in the calving facility. Each cow will require 7m² of lying space if they have a designated feed area, or 10m² if the feeding area is included in the bedded area. Contact your Teagasc advisor to discuss options.

Know your number



The carbon footprint of a farm refers to how many greenhouse gases (GHG) are emitted for every kg of milk or meat produced.

After each audit, all certified dairy and beef farmers receive a Farmer Feedback Report from Bord Bia, including the farm's carbon footprint, calculated using a model developed by Teagasc.

Your most recent carbon footprint is displayed on the first page of the report, alongside your previous audit result (where available), and the typical carbon footprint of farms within your category (Table 2).



Table 2: Sample carbon footprint calculation.

Parameter	Unit	Current assessment (production year 2020)	Percentage change from previous (production year 2018)	Average for 125-150 cow farms
Carbon footprint – dairy enterprise	kg CO ₂ /kg FPCM*	0.95	-5%	0.99

*FPCM = Fat and protein corrected milk.



The model that calculates the carbon footprint was updated on October 20, resulting in revised carbon footprints for all dairy farms. To view your revised carbon footprint, scan the QR code, go to www.bordbia.ie or call the help desk at 01-524 0410.

Teagasc National Dairy Conference

The Teagasc National Dairy Conference will take place on:

- Tuesday, November 23 in the Rochestown Park Hotel, Cork; and,
- Wednesday, November 24 at the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone.

There are many technical, economic and environmental challenges facing dairy farmers in the coming year. Implementing best farming practices and adopting research innovations will play a big part in meeting these challenges at farm level. Our conference will provide an excellent opportunity to debate and discuss the issues with fellow farmers, researchers and



Join Teagasc at this year's National Dairy Conference.

industry representatives. We look forward to meeting you there.

Details of the conference programme and bookings will be available from mid November on: www.teagasc.ie/events.

Managing weanling replacement heifers this winter

Winter management of replacement heifers is crucial for both spring- and autumn-born heifers to reach target weight at breeding. The target liveweight for November 1 is approximately 220kg for spring-born Friesian-type heifers, and 300kg for autumn-born heifers. Daily liveweight gains of at least 0.5kg for heifers on target weight, and 0.75kg for lighter heifers, are needed over the winter period. To achieve such gains the following actions need to take place now:

- test your silage to determine what quality is available for heifers – target is at least 72% DMD;
- treat heifers for parasites at or shortly after housing;

- separate light heifers from the group;
- ensure that there is 0.3m (1ft) of feeding space per heifer;
- feed heifers according to silage DMD and liveweight gain required (**Table 3**); and,
- meal should be high energy and contain good levels of quality protein and minerals.

Table 3: Weight gain from well-preserved 75, 70 and 65 DMD silage.

DMD (%)	75	70	65
Liveweight gain on silage only (kg/day)	0.75	0.55	0.35
Meal kg required			
Heifers on target	-	1.0	1.5
Lighter heifers	0.5	1.5	2.0

The fundamentals of a successful dry period



The dry period is a crucial time, when new udder infections can be picked up

from the environment leading to mastitis, even though clinical signs may not be seen until the start of the next lactation. Hopefully, you had the opportunity to catch some of the key messages that the CellCheck virtual week promoted during their campaign week in October. Just in case you missed them, they are available on the Animal Health Ireland (AHI) website to review. In brief, we focused on three areas that are fundamental to a good dry period and will help improve mastitis control and overall herd health and performance at this key time of year. These areas were:

1. The importance of hygienically tubing cows at dry-off, whether you are using teat sealant, antibiotic tubes or both.
2. The importance of good winter housing management.
3. The benefits of milk recording, and how to get the most value from the milk recording data for your farm.

To help you prepare for this dry season, CellCheck has produced a leaflet that demonstrates what is involved in effective tubing and also a self-assessment checklist for winter housing. This shows you how to take a fresh look at your winter housing with a view to preventing and managing mastitis, and outlines the small changes that you can make that will



Take care at drying off.

be effective in reducing the spread of disease. Both will be available online at: https://animalhealthireland.ie/resources/?q=&resource_type%5B%5D=documents&prog%5B%5D=cellcheck.

The entire dairy industry is working together to support you with the move towards using less antibiotics, and only using antibiotics where necessary to treat disease. Support is available through the CellCheck Dry Cow Consult, which is a chance for you to have a free three-hour consult with your trained veterinary practitioner. It is an opportunity to assess the current drying-off process and dry period performance, and identify additional gains that can be made. Some eligibility criteria apply, and for more information and to apply, see: <https://animalhealthireland.ie/training/tasah-dry-cow-consult/>.

By embracing the following motto for antibiotics: "Use as little as possible but as much as necessary", we will reduce the risk of antibiotic resistance in both human and animal health in Ireland.