Grazing research: Effect of post-grazing sward height on beef cattle performance

In two studies carried out at Teagasc Grange, suckler-bred yearling steers were rotationally grazed to a post-grazing sward height of either 4cm or 6cm, from April to November.

At the end of the grazing season, they were housed indoors for a 4.5-month finishing period. Increasing post-grazing sward height from 4cm to 6cm resulted in:

- 29kg higher liveweight at the end of the grazing season (+0.14 kg/day).
- 15kg heavier carcass at the end of the indoor finishing period.
- 512kg DM/ha reduction in annual grass production.
- 15% reduction in grazing stocking rate.
- Similar animal weight gain/ha.

–Peter Doyle, Edward O'Riordan, Mark McGee and Aidan Moloney

Peter Doyle.

Does twinning have a role for suckler beef systems?

Twinning can increase the number of calves and weaned weight per cow thereby, increasing output for suckler systems. However, costs per cow tend to be greater and liveweight performance per individual calf is reduced.

Using data from international studies on 'twinning' herds, research at Teagasc Grange is analysing the effect of twinning on the economic performance of pasture-based suckler beef systems.

Preliminary results indicate that higher twinning rates increased carcass output by up to 27% and increased farm net margin by up to 126% for spring-calving suckler-to-beef system.

These results suggest that, when part of a defined management structure, twinning has the potential to substantially improve net margins on suckler calf-to-beef farms.

This research will also explore the impact of twinning on greenhouse gas emissions from suckler calf-to-beef systems.

–Aoife Bergin and Paul Crosson

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