

BEEF

July 2023

Grassland management

Edited by
Martina Harrington,
Cattle Specialist



Rain gauge.

June has been a very tricky month as regards grass. At the time of writing, we still have a soil moisture deficit but rain is falling, albeit scattered. Each farm is going to have to react as per the rainfall on their farm. A key investment for 2023 is a rain gauge. To deal with tight grass supply and low rainfall we have some rules of thumb:

- use every blade of grass you have, graze out paddocks tight;
- minimise the number of animal groups;
- wean ewes and tighten up;
- forward creep calves onto the best of grass;
- introduce some creep meal, this will allow you to wean calves early if necessary;

- pull the bull by mid July;
 - scan cows and heifers, cull any not in calf;
 - keep fertiliser in the bag until soil moisture deficit (SMD) drops below 65mm;
 - have your own rain gauge – rainfall is nearly farm specific;
 - once rain does come, apply 15-20 units of nitrogen (N)/acre ASAP;
 - if possible, apply a compound containing potassium (K) and sulphur (S);
 - take out surpluses once available;
 - build back your fodder reserve;
 - complete a fodder budget – PastureBase Ireland has an excellent one; and,
 - if you need to source fodder, source it early.
- When the weather does correct, you may need to close more silage ground to meet next winter's forage requirements. This may require you to apply more fertiliser to the grazing ground to allow for higher stocking rates.

Health plan

July is a time when we think about dosing for stomach and lung worms. In very dry weather, worms migrate down to the base of the grass and onto the soil, or in the case of lungworm, they are encased in the dung pats, so they are unlikely to be picked up by animals. Once rain comes after heat, there will be an explosion of worms.

It is best practice to faecal sample animals before dosing to minimise the use of doses and thus reduce the chance of resistance building to products. This is a relatively inexpensive test and is easy to do. Once eggs are above 200 per gram, you should dose. You can also use the same test after dosing to see if the wormer is still working on your farm. Simply retest seven days after using a levacide product, or 14 days after using any other product.

Currently, there is a free service being provided by trained vets as part of the Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health (TASAH). You simply log on to the Animal Health Ireland website, and nominate your vet to carry out a herd or flock visit to look at various aspects of parasite management on farm. Then your vet will make recommendations and will conduct two faecal egg count tests for roundworms (stomach or gut worms). There is no cost to the herd or flock owner, as this is fully funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

Remember, fluke is usually not a problem at this time of year, so do not use combination products. If you have animals going to the factory, you should ask them to check the livers for fluke and react then.



Faecal sampling.

Be cautious with lungworm

Often times, you don't see eggs in the faeces until the damage is done; therefore, you cannot use a faecal egg test to detect lungworm. You need to be on high alert for a husky cough in calves and young animals; this can be accompanied by their tongues out and their necks extended. Once you see this in any of the group you need to dose the whole group immediately. This year, you may need to dose more than once.

For the most part, cows and older animals are resistant to lungworm, but we have seen in the last number of years when a long dry spell is followed by rain, cows have succumbed to lungworm infections. This is due to the severity of the infection.

For advice talk to your advisor or vet.

Plan for early weaning

If drought conditions persist or grass supply remains tight, you should plan to wean early. Once weaned, you can restrict cows, and because they are not milking, they will not lose as much condition. You can then try to cut any surplus grass but you will need a plan:

- vaccinate calves in early July for respiratory diseases;
- if they need a booster give one four weeks later;
- weigh cows and calves for the Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme (SCEP);
- introduce a small amount of concentrate;
- castrate in early August; and,
- wean in mid to late August.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Rumen microbiome as a predictor of methane output

STUART KIRWAN, PAUL SMITH and SINÉAD WATERS report on microbiome analysis to investigate methane production in beef cattle in an effort to reduce methane gas emissions by 2030.

Under EU legislation, Ireland has committed to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 40% by 2030, compared to 2005 levels. As part of these reductions, the agricultural sector is legally bound to reduce its emissions by 25%, with a 10% reduction in methane emissions. Methane from enteric fermentation in ruminant livestock accounts for ~60% of Irish agricultural-related GHGs. Reducing the quantity of methane emitted by livestock will be essential to achieving the agricultural sector's target of a 10% reduction in enteric methane emissions by 2030. The selection of low-methane-emitting animals is considered to be an effective, long-term mitigation strategy that could be employed in order to achieve the goals for 2050 set out by the EU. Previous work led by Teagasc, in collaboration with the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF), revealed a ~30%

difference in daily methane emissions between cattle of similar age, breed, and diet when ranked on the basis of the residual methane emissions (RME) index. These results, along with other data collected through projects RumenPredict, GreenBreed, and MASTER, including methane emissions data on 1,600 cattle, led to the generation of the first methane genetic evaluations for beef cattle in the world. Supplementary to this, rumen samples were collected from ~1,000 beef cattle for microbiome analysis and sequencing, and research is currently underway to investigate the heritability of key rumen microbes associated with methane production in predicting methane output in beef cattle. Further collaborative work between Teagasc and the ICBF will focus on validating these genetic proofs in pasture-based production systems.



HEALTH & SAFETY

Farm Safety Week 2023



July is the most dangerous month of the year on farms so extra vigilance is needed. A lot of hazardous work takes place, particularly with machinery, while safety for children needs special attention.

Farm Safety Week takes place commencing Monday July 17 with the following programme:

- Monday July 17 – launch of Farm Safety Week by a famous person;
- Tuesday July 18 – quad safety – new quad safety regulations;
- Wednesday July 19 – livestock handling –

talks at marts and social media video on livestock safety;

- Thursday July 20 – long-term health – collaboration with the Irish Heart Foundation; and,
- Friday July 21 – farm safety heroes – nominate a farm safety hero to the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA).

Farm Safety Week is a collaborative campaign, initiated by the Farm Safety Partnership in the UK and led in Ireland by the IFA Farm Family and Social Affairs Committee. Make farm safety your priority during Farm Safety Week and every week.

DairyBeef500 Farm Walk

Thursday, 13th July | 6pm
Jarlath & Austin Ruane,
Claremorris, Co. Mayo
Eircode: F12 E928

Topics to be discussed will include:

- Farm system/farm financials
- Calf sourcing
- Shed design & costings
- Winter feeding – fodder budgets

To register visit
www.teagasc.ie/DB500



