

# BEEF

November 2023

## Teagasc National Beef Conference

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Knowledge Transfer

The Teagasc National Beef Conference will take place this year on Tuesday, November 21 in the Shearwater Hotel in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. The theme for this year's

### National Beef Conference 2023

Improving our Beef Sectors Green Credentials

Tuesday, 21 November | 5pm

Shearwater Hotel,  
Ballinasloe, Co. Galway



Conference is "Improving our Beef Sector's Green Credentials". There is no charge for attending and it is an opportunity for all beef farmers to not only hear a number of very interesting beef talks, but also to meet with researchers, advisors and key industry personnel from both at home and abroad. The first session starts at 5.00pm and will have presentations on the significant new changes that are coming to beef breeding indexes, how beef heifers from the dairy herd can be finished on very low inputs, and the impact infectious bovine

rhinotracheitis (IBR) can have on herds, and options for controlling it.

The second session starts at 7.15pm and includes two international speakers. A presentation on what is driving greenhouse gas emissions on Irish beef demonstration farms and what measures are being taken to reduce them will be followed by a paper on how a pilot scheme in France is certifying the carbon footprint reductions happening on beef farms there, and how farmers in France are receiving a payment for these carbon credits. The

final presentation will be from Rupert Claxton, who is the meat director with Gira in the UK. His talk will cover what is happening to both beef and input prices on world markets and how these may

impact on Irish prices over the coming months and years. For more information on this important Conference check out our website at: [www.teagasc.ie/beefcon23](http://www.teagasc.ie/beefcon23).

## Liver fluke – deciding your strategy

When discussing what products should be used to control liver fluke there is often confusion among farmers on when the different products that are on the market should be used and how many times some of them have to be given. There is a very small number of products that contain triclabendazole that can control all the different stages of fluke in a beef animal from two weeks after housing.

While giving one of these might mean a single treatment will suffice for the winter, there is evidence that there is resistance building in fluke to these products, i.e., on some farms they do not kill enough fluke to be considered effective. Also they

are all oral drenches, which may not be convenient for some farmers. To check if they are effective, you should send off dung samples eight weeks following dosing to see if another treatment is needed. All the other fluke treatments do not kill the early immature fluke. This means that you either have to wait at least eight weeks (12 weeks for some products) before treating stock or else treat them earlier and go back in with a second treatment later in the winter. Treating earlier means you should avoid prolonging any ill effects fluke might be having on animal health but it will cost more and involve more work due to the second treatment being needed.

## Enough pen space

Have your cattle enough space for lying down in their pens? Where cattle are restricted in pens there will be a big impact on their performance over the winter. It is not uncommon to see pens of cattle that need to have two or three cattle removed to meet the optimum space requirements. **Table 1** outlines the recommended amount of lying space

needed in both slatted and straw-bedded pens for different groups of stock. Don't guess the dimensions of your pens. Take out a measuring tape and calculate exactly what number of stock each pen can hold. Don't forget to make an allowance for the size stock will be by the time they are leaving the pen.

**Table 1: Recommended housing space allowance (m<sup>2</sup> per head).**

Animal type	Slatted	Straw
Suckler cows	2.5-3.0	5.0
Calves	1.5-1.8	2.4-3.0
Cattle 220-300kg	1.2-1.5	1.8-3.0
Cattle 310-450kg	1.5-2.0	2.4-3.0
Finishing cattle 500-750kg	2.2-2.7	4.0

# 12 STEPS TO REDUCING EMISSIONS



Over 12 months, the Teagasc advisory newsletters will outline actions farmers can take to reduce their emissions.

## Step 11: Finish cattle earlier

### How does this reduce emissions?

According to the National Farm Survey, the average age of finished cattle is 26.8 months and 25.6 months for steers and heifers, respectively. Finishing steers and heifers at 24 and 22 months, respectively, means less methane emissions, and less emissions from manure management and fertiliser spreading. Each month earlier in slaughter age reduces carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) by approximately 350kg CO<sub>2</sub>e/head.

### Is there a gain for me?

Optimising liveweight performance from birth to slaughter and reducing age at slaughter is associated with higher profitability of cattle. Each month earlier in slaughter age increases profitability by approximately €30/head.

### What action do I take?

Optimise liveweight gain from grazed grass. Use the EuroStar index for breeding replacements (Replacement Index) and finishing cattle (Terminal Index). Improve the genetics of dairy beef animals by using the Dairy Beef Index (DBI) when selecting bulls on dairy farms. Use the Commercial Beef Value (CBV) when purchasing animals for finishing. Feeding management including good quality silage, good herd health status and high-merit beef genetics are important enabling factors.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

### Chainsaw safety



Chainsaw injuries involve cuts and lacerations to the limbs, neck, head and trunk. The major cause of timber-related fatal accidents is being struck by falling trees or branches while they are being felled. Appropriate training in chainsaw use and the wearing of suitable protective clothing to protect against these injuries is essential.

Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM), Martin Heydon TD, recently launched a video focused on safety with chainsaws, which was produced by Teagasc in association with FBD and the Farm Safety Partnership. View the video at the following link:  
<https://youtu.be/9W4znRL6o-w>.

## RESEARCH UPDATE



### Changes in multi-species swards

SARAH BURKE, MARK MCGEE, PAUL CROSSON and EDWARD O'RIORDAN examined multi-species swards: annual changes in botanical composition under rotational grazing at Teagasc Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Grange, Co. Meath.

Perennial ryegrass (PRG) is the most commonly sown species in Ireland due to its ability to produce high dry matter yields. Previous research at Teagasc Grange has shown that including white clover in PRG pastures reduced the reliance on chemical nitrogen (N) fertiliser application. Furthermore, cattle grazing grass-clover compared to PRG-only swards tended to have improved liveweight gain. Recently, there has been growing interest in multi-species swards to further exploit complementarity between plant species. A beef cattle grazing systems experiment commenced at Grange in April 2022 comparing grass-clover and multi-species swards sown the previous year. The grass-clover swards consisted of PRG and white clover, while the multi-species swards comprised PRG, legumes (white and red

clover) and herbs (chicory and plantain). No chemical N was applied to the grazing area. The botanical composition (dry matter basis) of the swards was determined over the 2022 and 2023 grazing seasons. The weed burden of both pasture types was negligible. The percentage of white clover in the grass-clover sward peaked in August, at 41% and 27% in 2022 and 2023, respectively. The botanical composition of the multi-species sward changed substantially over the two grazing seasons (Figure 1). Red clover was more dominant than white, particularly in August, during both years. The percentage of herbs, especially chicory, declined as the grazing season of 2022 progressed, and failed to recover during 2023. The herbs were mainly 'replaced' with PRG.

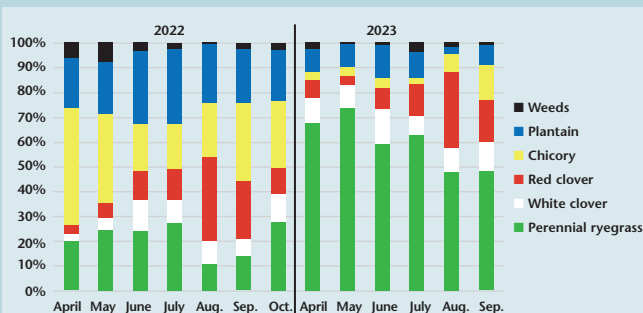


FIGURE 1: Changes in the botanical composition of multi-species swards over the 2022 and 2023 grazing seasons.