

BEEF

September 2023

National Beef Welfare Scheme

Edited by
Aidan Murray,
Beef Specialist

If you are not already signed up to the National Beef Welfare Scheme (NBWS), you have up to midnight on September 12 to do so. The application is online via the [agfood.ie](https://www.agfood.ie) website and can be completed by the farmer or their approved advisor. This is a one-year scheme and it partly replaces the old Beef Environmental Efficiency Programme – Sucklers (BEEP-S) scheme.

There are two mandatory actions to be completed:

1. Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) blood testing of the herd by an approved vet (up to 20 animals tested).
2. Meal feeding of weanlings for the four weeks pre weaning and for two weeks post weaning.

Maximum payment for the Scheme is €1,700 for a herd that blood tests 20 animals for IBR and meal feeds the maximum permitted 40 weanlings.

Why should you join?

There has been a lot of discussion around this Scheme and people have been disgruntled saying that 'there is no money in it for the farmer'. That is true if you feel that you should directly pocket what you get from the NBWS, but that is not the real function of the Scheme. It is there to incentivise and subsidise you into taking on two practices that will benefit your herd over time.

The meal feeding of weanlings will help maintain performance pre and post weaning and help to reduce the stress around weaning,

potentially leading to less problems. IBR is a highly infectious disease of cattle that is associated with the bovine respiratory disease complex. The IBR testing will be new to most people, but like some other European countries, Ireland is heading towards an IBR eradication programme and this will allow you

to get a free snapshot of the IBR status in your herd. How you react to the results will be your choice. For some herds it will be business as usual, but in herds where the incidence is higher than you would like, you can put a plan in place with your vet.

12 STEPS TO REDUCING EMISSIONS

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



Step 9: Increase calf output/cow

How does this reduce emissions?

By having productive, fertile cows we aim to produce beef efficiently and have a calf/cow/year. However, the national figures suggest that for every 100 cows, we are only producing 87 calves. This reduces our efficiency and impacts our ability to reduce our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

What action do I take?

As a suckler farmer you need to target a calf/cow/year. This can be achieved through improving your calving rate, having a breeding plan in place, and keeping good records that will allow you to weed out the poorer performing cows in your herd with confidence. Remember cows that are not producing a calf every year are costing you money.

September open days

Over the coming month, Teagasc is running beef farm walks and will have a big presence at this year's National Ploughing Championships.

September 7, 2.00pm: Future Beef walk – Ger McSweeney, Tooreenbawn, Millstreet, Co. Cork, P51 H324.

September 12, 5.00pm: DairyBeef500 walk – Pat Collins, Castlemartyr, Co. Cork P25 W892.

September 13, 5.30pm: Future Beef walk – Wesley Brown, Leagh, Co. Monaghan H18 R921.

September 19-21: National Ploughing Championships – Block 2, Row 21, Stand 337.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Finishing suckler bulls and steers

PAUL CROSSON, AIDAN MOLONEY, EDWARD O'RIORDAN and MARK McGEE of Teagasc Grange, report on the pasture finishing of late-maturing suckler bulls and steers in Ireland.

Finishing male cattle as steers rather than as bulls predominates in Ireland due to the perceived greater suitability of steers for grazing systems and market preferences for steer beef. However, performance metrics such as liveweight gain, carcass weight and feed efficiency are better for bulls when compared to steers. While this also tends to result in improved economic and GHG emissions performance, bull-beef systems are usually more intensive than steer systems, with higher concentrate feeding levels so the diet formulation and beef-to-concentrate price ratio have a critical bearing on these performance outcomes. To permit a comparison of bulls and steers on grazing-based systems, a study was carried out at Teagasc Grange using 60 spring-born suckler male weanlings. Cattle were finished at pasture in mid October (19.5 months of age) as steers or bulls with half of each gender supplemented with 4kg concentrate for the final three months. Overall, carcass weight (+44kg), kill-out proportion (+1.4% units) and carcass conformation score (+1.5 units, 15-point scale) were greater for bulls than steers; however, although steers were adequately finished (fat score 2+ or greater) with or without supplementation, bulls were only adequately finished when supplemented. Concentrate supplementation had a similar effect for bulls and steers, increasing carcass weight (+37 kg), kill-out proportion (+1.2% units) and carcass conformation (+1.1 units, 15-point scale) when compared to unsupplemented animals. The



Many performance metrics are better for bulls than steers.

economic and environmental impact of these alternative finishing options for male weanlings when integrated into a suckler calf-to-beef system was evaluated. It was assumed heifers were finished at 20 months of age and the farmed area was 50ha. At a base R3 beef price of €4.70/kg and a concentrate price of €340/t, net margin was highest for bull-based systems (+32%), although those systems were more sensitive to beef and concentrate prices. Supplementing with concentrates also improved margins for both steer- (+26%) and bull-based systems (+8%). Greenhouse gas emissions/cow units were slightly greater (+2.5%) for production systems finishing males as bulls compared to steers; however, this was reversed when GHG emissions were expressed/kg of carcass produced (-4%). Likewise, where supplementation was provided, GHG emissions were greater (+2.5%)/cow unit but lower/kg of carcass produced (-4%).

HEALTH & SAFETY



Deadline for National Farm Safety Measure: September 29

If you need new power take-off (PTO) shaft covers or ATV helmets, don't miss out on funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) to cover 60% of the eligible cost. The measure will cover up to two quad bike/ATV helmets and four PTO shaft covers. The grant aid is subject to a maximum eligible cost of €100 per PTO shaft cover and €150 per quad bike helmet. Only ATV/quad helmets and PTO covers that meet the scheme specifications are eligible. An expression of interest must be lodged online before purchase at agfood.ie. Applications can be made until September 29. To learn more contact your local Teagasc office.

Positive health and well-being

Positive health and well-being is vital for ongoing satisfaction with life. Mental Health Ireland (MHI) advocates the following five-step approach to help you feel good and function well: connect with the people around you; be active, take exercise; take notice, be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling; keep learning, do something new; and, give, volunteer or join a community group. If you find it difficult to maintain positive wellbeing, seek help. Further information can be found on the MHI website at: <https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/>.



The measure will cover up to two quad bike/ATV helmets and four PTO shaft covers.