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## Top five tips for September



- 1) Complete a simple cash budget in September detailing likely income and expenses for the coming four to six months. This will allow better planning of spending and farm activities this autumn. Speak to your advisor for details.
- 2) Drying off spring-calving cows will commence in about 60 days' time. Do you have a plan in place for use of selective dry cow therapy? Complete a milk recording in September and speak to your vet about the regulations on dry cow antibiotics.
- 3) Second cuts on many farms did not bulk as expected due to adverse weather. Straw supply may be limited also. Act early if silage supplies are likely to be tight. The first step is to do a quick fodder budget calculation, which can be done using PastureBase. Weigh up your options for empty cows before buying feed.
- 4) September is a good time to get some yard maintenance tasks completed. Reports from farm visits/inspections are that clean water entering slurry tanks is a common reason for slurry storage being inadequate. Clean and repair gutters and drains for clean water around the yard. Service lighting, auto scrapers, shed drinkers and fittings, and feeding equipment. Aim to work in comfort this winter.
- 5) With a more manageable workload at this time of year, it is an opportunity to take some time to see and learn about new things that could improve your farm performance. Discussion group trips and farm events are a great option for this; however, also consider visiting herds that have implemented proven practices and technologies.

# Grass management in September

There are two objectives in autumn grazing management of dairy cows. Firstly, the cows must be adequately fed using grazed grass as it is the cheapest high quality feed available. The second objective is to set the farm up for a good supply of spring grass. Many farmers do not realise that the grazing season begins in the autumn, and that autumn management of grazed grass is the primary factor influencing the supply of grass available in spring on any farm. Every day at grass is worth well over €2 per cow in this period.

Giving cows access to grass is a very good way to keep costs low and boost milk composition. However, data from PastureBase Ireland (PBI) indicates that most farmers do not reach the autumn grazing targets. Outlined in **Table 1** are the targets this autumn for different stocking rates on the milking platform. The focus of grazing management during September is to build up grass for later in autumn and thereby increase the number of days at grass in October/November.

**Table 1: Autumn grazing targets.**

Date	Cover/cow (Kg DM)	Average farm cover (Kg DM/ha)	Rotation length
<b>STOCKING RATE OF 2.5 LU/HA</b>			
September 1	300	750	30 days
Mid September	400-450	1,000-1,100	35 days
October 1	400	1,000	40 days
November 1	<b>60%+ of your grazing platform should be closed for spring at this stage</b>		
Fully housed		600	
<b>STOCKING RATE OF 3.0 LU/HA</b>			
September 1	330	990	30 days
Mid September	370	1,100	35 days
October 1	380	1,150	40 days
November 1	<b>65%+ of your grazing platform should be closed for spring at this stage</b>		
Fully housed		650	

### What to do if short of grass?

Correcting a deficit can be achieved by feeding more ration or silage/zero-grazed grass if you need to slow down the rotation.

The demand for grass can also be reduced by selling surplus cows, or removing other stock off the milking platform. It is important to slow down the rotation, as grass growth will decline rapidly during September.

### What to do if in grass surplus?

Grass growth rates during August increased dramatically, especially on many farms with heavy soils. Grazing very high covers of grass in early autumn can prove difficult to graze out unless the weather is exceptional. Do not get bogged down in too much surplus grass. It needs to be taken out as baled silage before weather/ground conditions deteriorate.

## Control thermoduric bacteria

Thermoduric bacteria are those that survive the pasteurisation process. They are present in dung, soil and animal bedding, and can enter the milking equipment through dirty teats at milking time.

These bacteria will cause issues in relation to milk processing and can limit the shelf life of pasteurised milk.

The risk of higher thermoduric readings increases as we move into autumn conditions, so take some steps to control:

- keep the cow's environment clean – collecting yards, roadways;
- change liners and rubber-ware as per

recommendations;

- descale the milking machine regularly;
- check the cleaning of the milking machine and bulk tank;
- disinfect the milking plant with peracetic acid as an additional rinse;
- clean the vacuum line regularly and especially after any overflow/backflow incidents;
- use a clean filter sock during washing;
- have sufficient hot water at 75-80°C for cleaning milking equipment; and,
- check the bulk tank periodically to ensure effective cleaning.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

### 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/>.



# Milking 10 times per week – could it work for you?

Milking is the most labour demanding task on Irish dairy farms and sets the structure of the working day. Altering milking frequency could provide more flexibility for farmers and allow for a better work/life balance, potentially making dairy farms more attractive workplaces. However, changes in milking frequency must consider a number of aspects before they can be recommended (e.g., milk production, cow health and welfare).

Last year a new study was undertaken at Teagasc Moorepark, which investigated: i) milking 10 times in seven days for the full lactation; and, ii) milking twice-a-day (TAD) for the first half of lactation, switching to 10 in seven for the second half of lactation (i.e., from July 4; 20 weeks into lactation). Finally, the performance of these two frequencies was compared to a third option, where cows were milked TAD for the full lactation.

Initial results show that milking 10 in seven for the full lactation reduced milk yield by 10% and milk solids yield by 11%. Interestingly, when cows were switched from TAD to 10 in 7 halfway through the lactation, their



*Altering milking frequency could provide more flexibility.*

production was the same as cows milked TAD for their full lactation. However, milking cows 10 in seven for the second half of lactation had positive effects in terms of labour saving, as well as savings in water and electricity usage. **Table 2** outlines how a 10 in seven milking frequency schedule would be carried out at farm level. Milking frequency can be changed on farms to reduce labour input and improve work/life balance. However, before a change in milking frequency should be considered, herd somatic cell count (SCC) should be <120,000 consistently across the year in order to ensure a successful transition across from TAD milking.

**Table 2: Example of a 10 in seven milking schedule compared to TAD milking.**

		Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
10 in seven	AM	7	9	7	9	7	9	7
	PM	3		3		3		
TAD	AM	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
	PM	3	3	3	3	3	3	3