

BEEF

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SCEP and dairy beef weighing scheme tasks

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There were over 20,000 successful applications submitted for the Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme (SCEP) and almost 14,000 dairy beef weighing scheme applications. It is important to emphasise the tasks that are required to be carried out on farms in order to receive maximum payments in both these schemes.

SCEP criteria

In year one, it's important to remember that you need to be a member of the Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme (SBLAS), Bord Bia's quality assurance scheme, by October 16, 2023. In this scheme, the majority of tasks work from an annual reference number. This is a prepopulated number of eligible animals entered on the online system at the time your application was submitted. It is important to familiarise yourself with your reference number in order to remain compliant with the scheme criteria.

1. The requirement for breeding females in year one is to have 50% of your reference number

four- or five-star genotyped cows by October 31, 2023. Applicants are also required to have 80% of their progeny born on the farm sired annually from a four- or five-star bull.

2. The next annual task to complete this year is genotyping. This requires farmers to genotype 70% of their reference number and needs to be completed by November 30, 2023.
3. Participants need to weigh 80% of eligible animals born on the holding annually and these weights are required to be submitted to the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) by November 1, 2023. The calf and the dam need to be weighed the same day, and the calf must be at least 50 days old and unweaned at the time of weighing.
4. The final task is to complete ICBF surveys. These capture various data around dam and calf traits including health, calf/dam quality, docility, etc. The annual deadline for completing these surveys is February 15.

Further terms and conditions for year one of the SCEP can be found on the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) website.

Dairy beef weighing scheme

Calves eligible for the dairy beef scheme consist of male calves sired from a dairy breed or all beef-sired calves born from a dairy cow.

Funding remains at €20 per calf, similar to previous years; however, up to 50 calves can be weighed and be eligible for payments in 2023. The criteria for an eligible calf for this scheme includes the following.

1. The calf must have been born between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023.
2. The calf needs to be at least 12 weeks of age at weighing time.

3. The calf needs to be in your herd for at least 10 days before they are weighed.

Prior to weighing calves, your own scales or borrowed scales need to be pre-registered with the ICBF if not previously completed. To be deemed acceptable for payments, the weights of these calves need to be recorded and submitted to the ICBF before 5.30pm on November 1, 2023.

On some farms routine dosing may be taking place at this time of year. This poses a perfect opportunity to get this weighing task complete well ahead of the deadline. Finally, you can make informed decisions in terms of nutrition plans or monitoring performance with these weighing results, so it is important to use this information wisely on your farm.

12 STEPS TO REDUCING EMISSIONS

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



Step 8: Improve suckler herd quality

How does this reduce emissions?

One way to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is to produce food more efficiently, i.e., with fewer inputs. Improving suckler cow quality reduces emissions through better fertility, improved efficiency and reduced GHG emissions from non-productive animals. Five-star females are 20% more carbon efficient than one-star animals.

Is there a gain for me?

A cow with a replacement index of €100 (five-star) will produce heifer progeny that, when retained for breeding, would leave €100 more per lactation than heifer progeny retained from a cow with a replacement index of zero when both cows are bred to the same bull.

What action do I take?

Every suckler farmer needs to have a breeding plan to ensure that the next generation of stock is superior to the previous one. Genetic improvement can be achieved through breeding high index replacement heifers, purchasing stock bulls that are five star for the important beef traits, and by using AI to avail of bulls that have high reliability attached to their breeding values.

Calculate fodder demand for winter

Fodder budgeting requires assessing current feed reserves on farm and forward planning now for the winter months ahead. On farms across the country, additional fodder may have been fed during drought conditions and wet weather. This has depleted reserves on some farms. It is important to complete your fodder budget well ahead of the winter housing period. To assess your demand, calculate how many cattle you intend to keep for the winter period (**Table 1**). The winter housing period will depend on what part of the country you are in. Review the length of time cattle spent indoors last winter and add an extra month's fodder reserve to this time period as a buffer.



Calculate what fodder you need for winter now.

Table 1: Guide to calculate the fodder demand on your farm.

Stock type	Number of stock (A)	Winter months (B)	Tonnes of fresh weight of silage required per month (C)	Total required (AxBxC)
Suckler cows			1.4	
Two+ year olds			1.3	
One to two year olds			1.3	
Weanlings			0.7	
Total tonnes of fodder required				

Points to note:

- complete your fodder budget today and assess your current situation;
- when measuring the fresh weight in tonnes in your silage pit, measure length x width x height in metres and divide your answer by 1.4 (this is allowing for a silage pit at 22% dry matter);
- fresh weight of bales can vary from farm to farm – as a guide allow 700kg fresh weight per bale when completing your calculations;
- consider selling surplus stock or meal feeding forward store cattle and get them finished off grass before housing commences, if you find yourself in a deficit scenario; and,
- alternatively, look at options for buying in additional feed in a fodder deficit – but do your sums on the economics of this ahead of purchasing the fodder.

HEALTH & SAFETY



Funding for PTO covers and ATV helmets

Funding is now available under the new National Farm Safety Measure to cover 60% of the eligible cost of up to two quad bike (ATV) helmets and four power take off (PTO) shaft covers. A total of €1.5m has been allocated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) to support farmers in the purchase of this equipment. 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. Check carefully before purchase. Applications can be made until September 29 using your [agfood.ie](https://www.agfood.ie) online account. To learn more contact your local Teagasc office.

August is part of the summer school holiday period. Ensure children are supervised while on the farm. Autumn-calving herds can be very busy during August. Always take time to identify the temperament of the cow/heifer before assisting. Calving gates help by providing a physical barrier to protect you. Take time to use them. Farm vehicles and machinery are very busy during August. Always ensure moving parts on machines are guarded and vehicles are driven safely.



Funding is available for quad helmets and PTO shaft covers.

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to see a video on harvest safety.

