

BEEF

October 2024

Grassland



Grass needs a rest period of about four months to accumulate for spring grazing.

Closing up paddocks in autumn is essential to ensure you have adequate grass next spring (Table 1), especially for breeding heifers, calved cows and finishing cattle. Here are some key points to remember.

Rest period: grass needs a rest period of about four months to accumulate for spring grazing. Begin closing your paddocks in October.

Rotation plan: 60-70% should be closed by the end of October. The earlier you start grazing in spring, the higher proportion of area you need closed.

Proper grazing: ensure that paddocks are grazed out fully before closing to allow sunlight to reach the base of the grass plant for tillering next spring.

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**YOU SHOULD
HAVE**

60-70%

**OF YOUR HOLDING
CLOSED BY
OCTOBER 31.**

Avoid re-grazing: once a paddock is closed, do not re-graze it over winter. This grass will be much more valuable next spring.

For a detailed autumn closing planner scan the QR code.



Table 1: Sample autumn closing and spring grazing plans.

Autumn 2024	Spring 2025
30% closed by mid October – silage ground, further away fields	Mid February: grazing ground, need lighter covers to train cattle to graze again, move through faster and have grass growing for second grazing rotation in April
30% closed by the end of October – grazing ground, dry fields, near yard or roadway, sheltered, preferably fresh reseeds for quicker regrowth for second grazing	Early March: silage ground, will have heavier covers, weather should be better in March, close by late March and cut mid May
40% closed during November – further away, poor infrastructure	Graze in late March/early April, more settled drier weather for land further away or slower growing paddocks

Caveat – keep wet fields in mind. They need to be grazed before they get too wet.

Maximise weanling performance at housing

Pre-housing dose: dose weanlings four weeks pre housing to ensure their lungs are healed from any infection when housed. Use a product with persistency. Ivermectin has a 21-day persistency, doramectin (Dectomax) a 35-day persistency, and moxidectin (Cydectin) a 42-day persistency against lungworm. Always read the data sheet for up-to-date information.

Vaccinations: ensure that weanlings are vaccinated against respiratory diseases such as pneumonia (IBR, RSV, and PI3). Pneumonia can be a major issue after

housing due to the stress and close confinement. All injectable vaccines should have their course completed a month pre housing. Intranasal vaccines are faster acting, but the duration of immunity is shorter. Talk to your vet about a suitable programme for your farm.

Weaning: have calves weaned a month pre housing to reduce stress levels and therefore illness. Calves should be on 1kg concentrate per day for four weeks pre weaning, and 2kg per day for the two weeks post weaning, as per the Beef Welfare Scheme.

Housing management for weanlings

Ventilation: ensure housing is well ventilated but not draughty. Proper air circulation reduces the risk of respiratory diseases, especially pneumonia.

Clean and dry bedding: provide clean, dry bedding (straw or alternative materials) to maintain comfort and reduce the risk of infection.

Space: ensure there is adequate space for each weanling to lie down (1.5-2.0m²/head) and eat (400-500mm) comfortably. Overstocking can reduce performance, and increase stress and disease risk.

Clean and disinfect: thoroughly clean and disinfect the housing area before bringing in the weanlings to reduce the risk of infection from previous batches of livestock.

Complete works on sheds: ensure barriers, gates, pens, lights, plugs, etc.,



Cattle need enough space to eat comfortably when housed.

are all working. It is easier and safer to complete these works in daylight and when sheds are empty.

Tidy your yard: winter is coming and with it dark evenings. Clean the yard to avoid trip hazards. Fix existing lighting, see if there are any dark spots, and install lighting before winter.

Upcoming events



Dairy Calf-to-Beef International Conference

– Clayton Whites Hotel, Wexford,
Wednesday and Thursday, October 16-17



Teagasc National Beef Conference

– The Landmark Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon,
Tuesday, November 19

Grant for PTO shaft covers

HEALTH AND SAFETY



Apply for a PTO shaft cover grant now.

Reminder – the National Farm Safety Measure 2024 provides a financial contribution for up to four PTO shaft covers. Closing date for applications is November 1. For further information talk to your advisor or go to: www.gov.ie/farmsafety.

Plan for winter housing of animals

It is important to make a list of repairs needed and plans to get them done in preparation for winter housing. Farm maintenance drives farm efficiency, saves time and labour, and improves safety.

Feed efficiency in beef cattle

KATE KEOGH, DAVID KENNY, and MARK MCGEE of Teagasc report on research that examined what makes one animal more feed efficient than another.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Feed accounts for up to 75% of the variable cost in beef cattle production systems and consequently, provision of feed is a major determinant of profitability and economic sustainability. Identifying and breeding cattle that are feed efficient – those that require less input feed per unit of growth (kg of body weight gain) – provides a means to reduce feed costs and increase profitability, contributing to beef farming sustainability.

Good for farmers and the environment

Feed-efficient cattle will contribute to environmental sustainability, as these animals typically produce less methane. Recent work conducted at Teagasc Grange

focused on examining the underlying biology of what makes one animal more feed efficient than the next. To date, our analyses have identified biological processes (fat metabolism and immune system function) that are contributing to feed efficiency in beef cattle. It has also highlighted a potential role for the NR1H3 gene in regulating feed efficiency. This gene warrants further evaluation for its use as a robust genetic marker for feed efficiency in beef cattle. Ongoing work in this project will further test and validate the results generated so far for their potential use as biomarkers for the genomic selection of feed-efficient beef cattle.