

# DAIRY

September 2024

## Top five tips for September

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*Keeping cows clean helps maintain milk quality.*

### 1. Review your winter feed budget

With the majority of silage crops now harvested, it's important to review what winter feed is available. Complete a simple winter feed budget. Where a deficit is identified take priority actions now to ensure there isn't a feed supply issue next spring.

### 2. Correct somatic cell count

Use milk recording to make informed decisions around managing somatic cell count (SCC). Identify any chronically infected cows and cull immediately in order to reduce herd infection levels in advance of drying off.



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SEPTEMBER  
THERE IS STILL  
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of the total grass  
growing season  
remaining for 2024.

3. Lameness – take preventive action

Wetter weather tends to lead to poorer roadway conditions, which in turn can lead to higher incidences of lameness. Footbath cows this month to disinfect and harden hooves ahead of the last grazing rotation.

4. Keeping cows clean

Clip cow tails to ensure they stay clean, help maintain excellent milk quality, and reduce the risk of mastitis infection. Removing excess udder hair

can also be beneficial to reduce the levels of soil they retain; however, caution is advised when doing this.

5. Winter housing

Wash and disinfect livestock housing in advance of the winter period – place particular emphasis on calf housing. Consider hot/steam washing these facilities if you have had issues with coccidiosis or cryptosporidium, as these parasites are very effective at surviving in damp, dirty conditions.

Manage grass to extend grazing

From early September there is still 20-25% of the total grass growing season remaining for 2024. Therefore, it's important to meet your grazing objectives for the remainder of the year, which are: to build grass supply in order to extend the grazing season into early November; and, to ensure the farm is closed with sufficient grass supply for spring 2025. These objectives will help reduce feed budget costs through savings in both concentrate and silage requirements, while ensuring good animal performance. Every extra day at grass in the autumn is worth approximately €3 per cow.



Every extra day at grass in autumn is worth about €3 per cow.

The autumn grazing targets are outlined in Table 1. Measuring grass weekly during September on PastureBase Ireland (PBI) is important to keep your farm in line with those grazing targets. On most farms all of the milking platform should be available to the milking herd by now. Any remaining

Table 1: Autumn grazing targets.

Date	Cover/cow (kg DM)	Average farm cover (kg DM/ha)	Rotation length
Stocking rate of 3.0 LU/ha			
September 1	330	990	30 days
Mid September	350	1,050	35 days
October 1	370	1,100	40 days
November 1	65% + of your grazing platform should be closed		
December 1	650-800kg DM/ha AFC depending on spring demand		

young stock should be moved to out farms, where possible, to maximise the amount of grass available to the milking herd. Higher stocked milking platforms (3.5 LU/ha +) and farms that do not achieve the autumn grazing targets can see increased supplement costs of €100/cow.

If average farm cover (AFC) is behind target in early September, use supplements such as silage, concentrate or zero-grazed grass to build AFC while grass growth and soil temperatures are still high. Delaying this to late September will increase the level of supplementation needed.

## Control thermoduric bacteria

Thermoduric bacteria naturally occur in the cow's environment in soil, faeces, animal feed and bedding. These bacteria survive the pasteurisation process, and therefore cause issues in relation to milk processing and can limit the shelf life of pasteurised milk. Increased emphasis should be placed on the correct management practices in order to control thermoduric levels.

### Cow cleanliness

Initial contamination of milk occurs during the milking process if udders or teats are contaminated with material such as soil or faeces. This often results in moderate thermoduric counts. Ensure the cow's environment is kept clean, with particular focus on farm roadways and collecting yards. Clipping cow tails and udder hair will help improve cow hygiene. Milkers should always wear gloves when milking and wash them regularly throughout the milking process.

### Correct plant cleaning procedure

Following a recommended plant cleaning procedure is critical to the prevention of an environment that will facilitate milk



*Thermoduric bacteria live in the cow's environment in soil, faeces, animal feed and bedding.*

contamination. Where thermoduric counts are very high, milking plant contamination is the likely the cause. Remember the three Ts with regard to plant cleaning – temperature, titration, and turbulence:

- temperature – ensure sufficient hot water is available for washing (75-80°C) – hot wash solution should still be at least 45°C at dumping for effective cleaning;
- titration – ensure detergents are used at the correct concentrations – a higher concentration (1%) will be required for cold washing, and where automatic washing systems are fitted, regularly check that the correct volume of detergent is being used, and always recalibrate if changing products – where peracetic acid is being added to the final rinse ensure all detergent has been rinsed from the plant before circulating the peracetic acid solution; and,

always a small amount of solution in the wash trough when the wash solution is circulating. Finally where an air purge system is fitted, listen to check that it is functioning properly, as it is a vital part of the wash process in larger parlours.

Feed and fertiliser costs have driven much of the year-on-year increase in dairy costs. However, our analysis of profit monitor figures for 2023 showed that high- and low-margin farms differ across a range of categories (**Figure 1**). For example, the category 'other variable' (vet, parlour, other consumables and sundry costs) made up 20% of the difference in costs between high- and low-margin farms, while fixed costs like machinery running and maintenance made up 27% of the difference. As the year moves on and cash flow begins to move into a more positive position, it is vital to maintain cost focus. Watch for discretionary spending on small items, overruns on

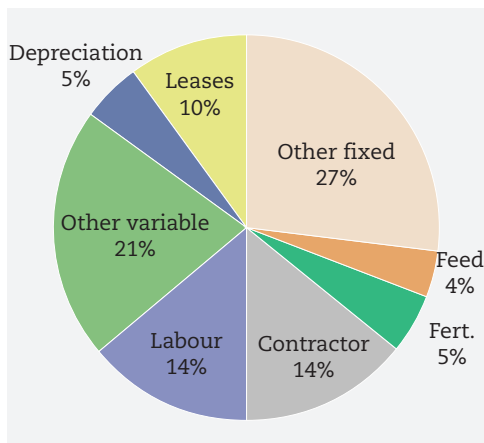


FIGURE 1: Cost difference high- and low-margin farms.  
maintenance work and doing capital projects from cash in particular.

The National Farm Safety Measure 2024 provides a financial contribution to participating farmers for up to four PTO shaft covers. Closing date for applications is November 1, 2024. The grant aid will be subject to a maximum eligible cost of €100 per PTO shaft cover. For further information, contact your advisor or go to: <http://www.gov.ie/farmsafety>.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY



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