

ENVIRONMENT

August 2024

Farmland Biodiversity Event



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

Farmland Biodiversity Event



Wednesday
28 August | 11 AM
to 3 PM



Birr Castle Demesne

Guest speakers

John Feehan, Helen Sheridan, Éanna Ní Lamhna

Please note this is an outdoor event and admission does
not include entry to the interior of Birr Castle



EDITED BY
CATHERINE KEENA,
TEAGASC COUNTRYSIDE
MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST



1,000

GALLONS OF SLURRY

at 6% dry matter
to grass is
equivalent to a
50kg bag of 9-5-32
fertiliser when
applied by LESS.

You are invited to attend a Farmland Biodiversity Event in Birr Castle Demesne, Co. Offaly, on Wednesday, August 28, from 11.00am-3.00pm. The biodiversity value and best practice management of the following will be addressed: hedges; woodlands; watercourses; peatlands; grasslands; grass margins; farmyards; and, soil biodiversity. On farm, initiatives to maintain and enhance biodiversity, including pollinators and birds, will be showcased.

Book now at www.teagasc.ie/farmlandbiodiversity.

Hedgerow Week 2024 – better hedges for all

To mark Hedgerow Week, a series of events will take place on Teagasc farms.

These events, which all take place at 11.00am, will showcase hedge planting demonstrations of topped hedges and treelane hedges planted over the past three years, as well as best practice hedge management and native tree planting:

- Monday, September 2: Ballyhaise, Co. Cavan;
- Tuesday, September 3: Athenry, Co. Galway;
- Wednesday, September 4: Clonakilty, Co. Cork;
- Thursday, September 5: Curtins Moorepark, Co. Cork; and,
- Friday, September 6: Kildalton, Co. Kilkenny.

Valuing unimproved grassland

Sixty years ago nearly every field would have scored highly in the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES), with many species of flowers and grasses, and all the invertebrates and birds that such swards support. With the intensification of agriculture, ryegrass swards now dominate and produce high quantities of milk and

meat. Biodiversity in such improved grassland is in the surrounding hedges, watercourses and rough grass margins. Because of the decline in unimproved grassland, there is a new appreciation of its contribution to biodiversity and such grassland is financially rewarded under ACRES. Advisors assess the number and



Bird's foot trefoil.



Forget me not.



Ox-eye daisy.



Yarrow.



Lady's smock.



Common knapweed.

TEAGASC ADVISORY NEWSLETTER

ENVIRONMENT



A meadow in the demesne of Birr Castle has been managed in a traditional way since the late 18th century. The meadow is cut once a year and no fertiliser is applied. Some 90 species occur in and around this meadow, including 20 grass species that are common and 10 that are not. Come to see this meadow at the Farmland Biodiversity Event on August 28.

cover of indicator flower species and the structure of the sward, giving a field score that determines the payment received by the farmer.

With these results-based payments, there are no rules; farmers are free to choose

what they want from the field. If you want to retain these species, do not apply fertiliser or lime.

Grazing or cutting is essential to maintain the grassland – otherwise scrub will take over.



Cowslip.



Iris.



Bush vetch.



Primrose.



Lady's bedstraw.



Field scabious.

Water quality message from ASSAP

The Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP) has the following water quality advice for farmers:

Cover/catch crops

- Plant cover crops directly after harvest, as this protects soils and reduces losses of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and sediment to water; and,
- the cover crop can be incorporated into the soil in the spring to provide nutrients for the following crop.

Empty slurry tanks early

Empty all slurry tanks as soon as possible, and well in advance of the closed season. Slurry is a valuable source of nutrients on the



Plant cover crops directly after harvest.

farm and can benefit grass and crop growth when applied correctly. One thousand gallons of slurry at 6% dry matter to grass is equivalent to a 50kg bag of 9-5-32 fertiliser when applied by low-emission slurry spreading (LESS). Target slurry at silage fields and fields at index 1 or 2 for P and potassium (K). Slurry applied at the wrong time or incorrectly can have a negative impact on water quality.

A message from Signpost

Most technologies have multiple benefits.

Farm actions	Soil	Biodiversity	Gaseous emissions	Water quality
Soil test, NMP, optimum soil fertility	✓		✓	✓
Organic manures – use to replace purchased N, P, K (5Rs)	✓		✓	✓
Low N swards (clover and multi-species)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hedgerow management		✓	✓	✓
Plant native trees		✓	✓	
Cover crops	✓		✓	✓
Grassland management (PastureBase)	✓		✓	✓
Improved animal productivity/efficiency			✓	✓

Many more technologies available to adoption today and more under development through research for the future.