

BEEF

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Importance of pre-calving minerals

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The benefits of a pre-calving mineral supplement for cows cannot be overstated.

Ensuring suckler cows receive an adequate and properly formulated pre-calving mineral supplement is critical for maximising animal performance, reducing calving issues, and enhancing overall productivity. The following are some of the key benefits of pre-calving minerals.

1. Improved calving results: feeding minerals like magnesium (Mg), phosphorus (P), selenium (Se), and iodine at the correct levels reduces the risk of calving difficulties, such as retained placenta and milk fever. These minerals also support muscle function, including uterine contractions during calving.



IT COSTS JUST
AN EXTRA

€1.20

per cow over a
60-day feeding
period to feed a
higher-quality
pre-calving mineral
that costs an extra
€200 per tonne.

Note, Mg and P are ‘major elements’ and are not supplied by boluses. You may need to feed 17g of Mg and 4g of P per day, so a mineral powder is recommended.

2. Healthier calves: Se and iodine are particularly important for calf vigour. Se passes through the placenta to support muscle development, while iodine aids in producing lively calves with a strong suck reflex.
3. Enhanced reproductive performance: trace elements including copper (Cu) and zinc (Zn) contribute to post-calving fertility and reproductive health. Protected forms of these minerals help overcome dietary antagonists like molybdenum or iron. This can be more of an issue after applying lime to pastures and silage ground.
4. Improved colostrum quality: vitamins A and E, when adequately supplied pre calving, boost colostrum quality, which is essential for newborn immunity.

Economic considerations

High-quality minerals can cost more, but their benefits in reducing calving-

related issues, promoting cow and calf health, and supporting reproductive performance outweigh the expense. For example, an extra €200 per tonne increases costs by just €1.20 per cow over a 60-day feeding period, demonstrating good value for the potential gains:

- Mineral cost: €1,200 per tonne is €1.20 per kg. Feed 100g per day for 60 days = 6kg. Total cost: €7.20 per animal.
- Mineral cost: €1,400 per tonne is €1.40 per kg. Feed 100g per day for 60 days = 6kg. Total cost: €8.40 per animal.

The chelated source of some minerals (e.g., Cu) make minerals more expensive but in the case of Cu, much more available to the animal. It protects the mineral so more is absorbed and not passed through digestion. By following these guidelines and collaborating with agricultural advisors or veterinarians, you can ensure a productive calving season, healthy calves, and robust cows prepared for the breeding season ahead.

Assessing fodder

Teagasc completed a national fodder survey in September, which indicated fodder deficit issues on some farms. Of the farms surveyed, 20% had a small deficit, but 18% of farms had a deficit of greater than 10% to fill.

It is important at this stage of the winter to assess fodder and compete a mid-winter budget. Review stock numbers on the farm. If there will be a deficit there are a number of options to consider: purchasing additional



There are options if you are short on fodder – speak to your advisor.

silage/meal (check quality); selling stock; meal feeding; or, finishing animals quicker. Teagasc has developed a ration reckoner to compare feed ingredients relative to price and value – seek advice from your advisor.

Plan spring
fertiliser
applications for
tillage crops



Get your slurry
analysed for nutrient
content



Create a slurry
spreading plan
with your advisor
to get the most
from it



Get your nutrient
management plan
completed.



Continue to spread
lime, where you can



Order your
protected urea
now



Start 2025 with health and safety in mind

As we start 2025, put safety and health front and centre in your plans and actions. Particular attention needs to be given to moving vehicles, such as tractors, teleporters and ATVs. Risks associated with livestock, slurry handling and avoiding falls from heights must also be closely managed. Take time now to review your risk assessment document and plan any necessary actions.

HEALTH AND SAFETY



Review your risk
assessment
document now.

Upcoming webinar series 2025

DairyBeef 500 webinar: 'Sourcing and finishing of high-quality dairy beef animals' takes place on Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 8.00pm.

The Future Beef team will also host a two-part webinar:

- Part 1: 'Pre-calving' takes place on Tuesday, January 21 at 8.00pm; and,
- Part 2 'Calving and post-calving management' takes place on Thursday, January 23 at 8.00pm.

Further details available at: www.teagasc.ie.

Wormer effectiveness

ORLA KEANE of Teagasc Grange, Co. Meath is part of a new project that will test for anthelmintic resistance in Ireland.

Good worm control is a cornerstone of pasture-based beef production and is currently highly dependent on the use of wormers (anthelmintics). However, gut worms are becoming resistant to the products we use to control them. This is known as anthelmintic resistance. Despite the myriad of products on the market, there are currently only three classes of anthelmintic available for the control of gut worms in cattle: benzimidazoles (white drenches); levamisoles (yellow drenches); and, macrocyclic lactones (clear drenches). Resistance to all three has now been found in Ireland. The best wormer is the one that kills the worms on your farm. A new project called Managing Anthelmintic Resistance in Cattle Sustainably (MARCS)



The best wormer is the one that works on your farm.

will start at Teagasc Grange in 2025. This will test for anthelmintic resistance on Irish farms. If you are interested in testing your farm, all information on the project and how to sign up is available at: <https://www.teagasc.ie/animals/amr/research/marcs-project/>.

CalfCare on-farm events 2025

Teagasc and Animal Health Ireland (AHI) are running a series of CalfCare on-farm events throughout January, supported by Feed for Growth. This series of events is being run with the help and support of the co-ops and meat processors in each region. The events are held each January to keep farmers informed of best practice husbandry and management practices to deliver best performance from calves in their care.

Scan the QR code for further details. Topics to be discussed include:

- preventing pneumonia in calves;
- understanding dairy and beef indices to produce quality calves;
- ways to utilise pain relief during the calving season; and,
- achieving optimal rumen development.



SCAN ME