

# BEEF

May 2025

## Deadline dates

EDITED BY  
DAVID ARGUE,  
BEEF SPECIALIST



*Applications for the 2025 NDBWS must be lodged online.*

A new dairy-beef scheme (National Dairy Beef Weighing Scheme (NDBWS)) was announced and opened by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in late March 2025. The Scheme will offer a €20/calf payment, up to a maximum of 50 calves. Participants in the Scheme will be required to weigh eligible calves and submit weights to the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF). All calves must be at least 12 weeks old at the time of weighing, and weights uploaded within seven days. All weights should be submitted before 5.30pm on November 1, 2025. Applications for the 2025 NDBWS must be lodged online through [agfood.ie](https://agfood.ie) before midnight on Thursday, May 15. The closing date for the Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) scheme is May 15, 2025. Remember to book your appointment with your advisor early in order to avoid errors/penalties.



**THE NATIONAL  
DAIRY BEEF  
WEIGHING  
SCHEME WILL  
OFFER A**

**€20** /calf

**payment, up to  
a maximum of  
50 calves.**

# Steps for making quality silage



*Getting a good crop of silage is vital and there are many factors to ensuring you're not left short over winter.*

## 1. How much quality silage is required?

The first step is to decide how much and what type of silage is needed. For spring-calving suckler herds, dry cows will need about six bales of 68 DMD silage each over the winter. All remaining silage should be of a higher quality (72-74 DMD) for weanling/store cattle and calved cows.

## 2. Cut early at the right growth stage.

Grass growth stage at harvest is the most important factor in deciding silage quality. Once seed heads appear, DMD will be around 70%. This will drop by one point every two to three days after that. Aim to cut from mid to late May before seed heads appear, rather than in mid June.

## 3. Quality over bulk. Using a 'one big first cut' approach to make silage increases risk of fodder shortages because second-cut yields are reduced by pushing first cuts into mid June.

## 4. Considerations if nitrogen (N) is in the crop. A useful guide for fertiliser N is that grass uses two units per day on

average. Fertiliser should be applied 45-50 days before planned cutting date. If weather conditions are suitable for cutting before the planned cutting date, test the grass crop for sugars rather than sticking rigidly to the 'two-unit rule'.

5. Test sugars. High sugar content allows the crop to ferment quickly in the pit or bale. Ideally we want sugars at 3% to allow good preservation of the crop. If sugars are lower the crop may need wilting for 24 hours. Mow in the evening when sugars are highest if possible.
6. Wilt for a day. Wilting grass to increase dry matter is very beneficial to good preservation. Tedding out for 24 hours is recommended. Grass will not dry enough in large rows even if left for 36 hours.
7. Plan for a good second cut. With earlier cutting there is a great opportunity to make a good second cut of silage in July. Speak to your advisor about a feed budget and proper fertiliser plan for second-cut silage.

## Time to turn out dairy-beef calves



*A successful transition to outdoors is essential for calves.*

Farmers are getting ready to turn spring-born dairy-bred calves out to grass. A successful transition from indoors to outdoors is essential when it comes to avoiding sickness and maintaining good thrive. Only well-weaned, healthy calves that are eating a minimum of 1.5kg of concentrates a day should be turned out. Keep an eye on the weather forecast and aim to turn calves out when a few dry warm days are expected. Select a paddock close to the yard that has good shelter. Often big square bales can be

used in paddocks if natural shelter is limited, and these can also act as a source of fibre to the calves. Paddocks that have had high levels of N applied or have very lush grass should be avoided immediately post turnout to prevent any digestive upsets. Continue feeding concentrates at a rate of 1.5kg/day post turnout for four to five weeks to help aid transition. If grass quality is average then it will be necessary to feed concentrates throughout the summer to achieve target daily liveweight gains.

## Keep an eye on your bull

Breeding season is about to commence on many suckler farms. Careful observation of the stock bull at mating is needed for a successful season. Make sure the bull is mounting and serving cows correctly. This should not be a problem for a mature bull, however it may take some young bulls several



*If a bull is not interested or showing any activity towards the cow then there is something wrong.*

attempts to succeed. If a bull is not interested or showing any activity towards the cow then there is something wrong, so AI or another bull could be needed.

Most activity usually occurs during early mornings and late evenings when cows are most likely to show heat, so careful

observation at this time is crucial. Keep an eye on cow activity and record each cow when she is served. Monitor the cows closely for any signs of repeating three weeks later.

Catching any problems early allows time to intervene and keep the breeding season on track for the year.

## Machinery safety



Machinery movement causes danger.

May is the month when tractor and machinery work ramps-up on farms. The silage season gets going, and fertiliser and slurry spreading along with crop spraying all take place. All this leads to high injury risk. Most injuries occur due to being struck by a

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

farm vehicle. Blind spots exist around vehicles where the driver's view is obstructed – particularly at close range.

This calls for alert driving at a suitable speed. Give consideration to where vehicles and persons may be, particularly children.

Implement segregation measures between vehicles and persons, particularly in and around farm yards.

Speak positively about injury dangers to children and young persons. They gain their safety values from adults. Speak to your machinery contractors about safety on your farm.

A lot of power driven machinery work is done also in May. Make sure that PTO and power shafts are adequately covered and stay well clear of rotating machinery parts.