

Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 4th September 2020

Grazing in difficult conditions

High rainfall and storm conditions have left grazing conditions extremely difficult for all types of stock. On heavier farms, where land is very wet, it is challenging to keep animals out grazing while at the same time minimising damage to paddocks.

On-Off Grazing

Teagasc research has shown that cows graze in bouts of 2-3 hours when they go out with an appetite. When cows are actively grazing, they spread their weight across all four feet and therefore do less damage than when they are walking where all their weight is on two legs with each step. Therefore, cows that go out with appetite and actively graze do less damage than cows that are fed inside and then let out or cows that are finished grazing. Once they are finished grazing, they look for a dry lie down and they keep walking until they find it. In wet weather like we have at the moment, this is when they do a lot of damage unless they are brought in. The cows will need indoor feeding of quality baled silage along with two 3 hour grazing bouts outside and whatever meal feeding level they are getting.

The gaps into the paddock can get very messy and it is in this type of current wet weather where having a number of gaps into paddocks really helps to minimise the damage.

Re-introducing the strip wire and back fence also helps to minimise damage as once the ground is hoof-marked, these fill with rain water and the cows will go twice as deep on the next passing. The back fence prevents the cows going back over ground that is already grazed. Strip grazing with 12 hour allocations is recommended in these conditions.

Avoid grazing very heavy covers if at all possible as cows will do more damage in these paddocks. Pick out the paddocks with medium covers (1200—1500 kg/DM/ha) as the cows will graze through quicker and do less damage. Walking the farm on a weekly basis and picking and choosing your driest paddocks and paddocks with medium to low grass covers will also help the situation. Remember to keep a focus on building your average grass cover on the farm to 1,000 kilograms of grass Dry Matter per hectare at the end of September from now on. The grass built up in this period will keep your stock grazing out until early to late November and it is a lot cheaper to feed your animals by doing this.

Grassland Farmer of the Year 2020

The Grassland Farmer of the Year competition for 2020 was launched recently. The aim of the competition is to recognise and acknowledge Irish farmers who are achieving high levels of grass utilisation in a sustainable manner. Use the following link for more information on the competition and for the entry form.

<https://bit.ly/GFOY2020>

Beef Finisher Payment Scheme

This voluntary scheme aims to support beef finishers in Ireland who have been severely impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic. The reference period for the scheme includes animals slaughtered between the 01/02/20 to 12/06/20 inclusive. The scheme must be applied for online and the closing date is the 9th of September 2020.

A once off payment of €100 is made per bovine animal aged over 8 months and presented to a slaughtering establishment in the period 01 Feb 2020 to 12 June 2020 (Max 100 per individual herd). Animals exported for slaughter to Northern Ireland will not be eligible for payment.

DAFM Registered Farm Partnerships are also eligible to apply provided that;

- The application is made under the same Farm Partnership Registration Number (RFP) as the BPS application for 2020 and signed by each partner.

- A maximum threshold of 200 animals will apply to RFP of two herds. A maximum threshold of 300 animals will apply to a RFP of three or more herds.

If animals that have been presented for slaughter by an agent, dealer or another herdowner within 30 days of purchase including those purchased in the mart, payment may go to the previous herdowner provided they had the animal for more than 30 days. Cattle slaughtered in the reference period that are presented for slaughter by or on behalf of a slaughtering establishment will not be eligible for payment. Payments are likely to issue in mid-November.

Applicants must be over 18 years or over at the time of application and be the holder of an active herd number with Herdowner status. A Herdkeeper is not acceptable. A basic payment scheme application must have been submitted to the Department for the year 2020 and before 30/09/20. The herdowner must be a member of Bord Bia Quality Assurance at the time of application or is prepared to become a member before the 30/09/2020. You must remain in the programme until after 30/09/21. There is no Organic Nitrogen reduction required; no requirement for participation in a recognised environmental scheme and no limit on dairy cow numbers in the reference period. For help in applying for this payment, contact your local Teagasc office in Dungarvan, Kilkenny or Mullinavat.