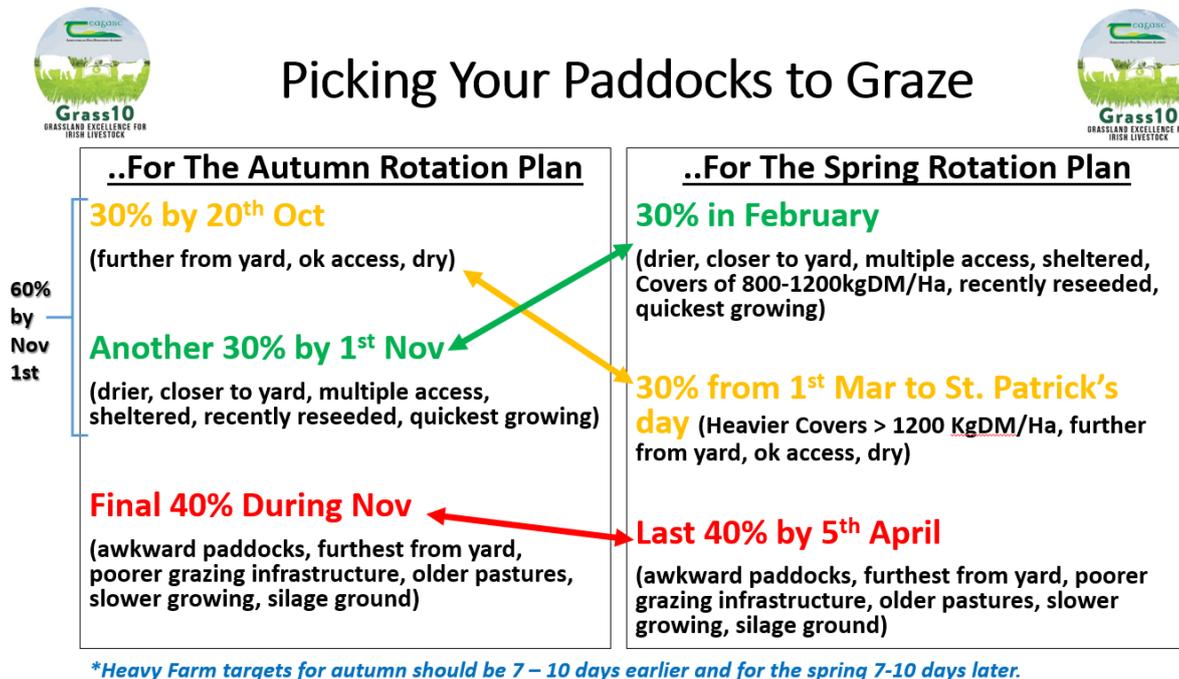


Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 5th November 2021



Autumn grazing targets

Grass growth in 2021 has been very unpredictable much like our weather. Pasturebase data would suggest we had higher grass growth rates in mid-September compared to mid-June in particular parts of the county. Attention now turns to closing paddocks to ensure we have adequate quality grass for spring 2022. The chart above simplifies the autumn and spring rotation plans. When choosing the order of closing paddock (i.e. your last grazing for 2021) in autumn you need to think of the following:

1. Demand for spring grass – calving/lambing pattern or cattle turnout dates
2. Soil type and access points – easily accessed dry paddocks for early turnout
3. Close to yard – have stock close by when workload is at peak on farm
4. Recently reseeded – these should have more vigour and recover quickly after grazing

The order of closing paddocks in the autumn will determine what paddock are grazed first in the spring, a key point to remember is your first paddock closed will not necessarily be the first paddock grazed the following spring as it will generally have the heaviest cover 13-1400kg/DM/Ha of grass and animals coming straight from the shed will be transitioning from a silage diet back to grass and would prefer covers of 800kg/DM/ Ha.

Closing targets for drier farms would be as follows: have 30% grazed by 20th October, 60% by 1st November and the remaining 40% grazed in November. Heavier farms could be 7-10 days earlier depending on the year. A key message to remember is that over 65% of the grass you graze next spring will be growth in the autumn so don't be tempted to re-graze closed paddocks. The old adage of "Grass grows Grass" really comes into play here. If you do re-graze these closed paddock you risk lowering your AFC (average farm cover) below 500kg/DM/ha. Running your farm cover below this will have consequence on winter growth, paddocks with low covers will grow very little over the winter leading to a scarcity of grass in the spring when it's most valuable. Spring grass is over twice as valuable as autumn grass so choose wisely.

Why Soil sample?

As the weather has deteriorated over previous week animals are been housed from grass and attention has turned to yard work. However this is also the time to start planning to maximise grass production for 2022. Soil sampling is the first stop in achieving this as it identifies any deficiencies in your soil. These issues can then be rectified with targeted applications of Lime, slurry, farmyard manure or chemical fertiliser. For optimum grass production we require a pH of 6.3, with index 3 for Phosphorus and Potassium in our soil. Over 90% of the samples tested return deficient in either lime, phosphorus or potassium which will be greatly reducing your soils ability to grow grass.

Chemical fertiliser prices for 2021 look ominous, as farmers we need to get as much bang for our buck when spreading all forms of fertiliser be it organic or chemical. Soils that are below optimum levels for pH, P or K can return up to half the amount of grass as an optimum soil.

Tuesday Tea Talk - The Geography, Geology and Geography of the Comeraghs

Michael O'Donoghue gave the second Comeragh Upland Communities Tuesday Tea Talk in the Ballymacarbry Community Centre. His talk was on the Geography, Geology and Geography of the Comeraghs

Michael described the rock formation processes between 500 and 330 million years ago, resulting in the dominance of old red sandstone with smaller areas of limestone and slate. During this period, the Comeragh mountains were formed from the prolonged but persistent movements of the earth's crust. These movements led to processes such as folding, faulting, jointing and vulcanicity. In addition, the over 300 million years of weather led to erosion of the rocks and elements of soil formation. Between 120,000 and 15,000 years ago, the effect of climate change were several ice ages. The enormous ice masses sculptured the Comeragh rocks to provide today's visual landscape that makes the mountain unique.

The Comeraghs are made up of three divisions with an area of 200 km² with the highest point reaching 792 m. Seven main rivers drain into the Suir valley and the Waterford coastal plain, and the river Colligan is the longest at 20 km. The mountains unique glacial landscape includes 14 corries, which are of national importance.

On this landscape, the habitats and biodiversity have evolved, which together form the natural capital. For over 4,000 years, people have lived and managed the mountain. The integration of man and the natural capital has resulted in a rich cultural heritage.

The next Tuesday Tea Talk – *The Comeraghs Archaeological Heritage* – will be in the Rathgormack Community Centre on November 2nd. Hugh Carey, an archaeologist with the National Monuments Services, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, will do the talking.

The Comeragh Upland Communities is an EIP project of the Teagasc Waterford Hill Sheep Discussion Group.

Photo caption

Owen Carton, Project Manager, and Michael O'Donoghue who presented his talk was on the Geography, Geology and Geography of the Comeraghs.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



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The European Agricultural Fund
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investing in rural areas

The Comeragh Uplands Communities is a European Innovation Partnership project being administered by DAFM. The Project is funded by the EU Recovery Instrument Funding under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2022”

