

Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 6th November 2020

Grassland

Farms on Track to have over 60% closed this week

Data from PastureBase Ireland shows farmers that measured in the past week have 54% of their farm closed. This is estimated to be around 65% by 1st Nov.

By 1st Nov: dry farms should have 60% of the farm closed. Heavy soils farms and higher stocked farms should have 70-80% closed.

If ahead of target reduce grazing area and increase supplementation. If behind target graze lighter covers, remove silage from diet, and increase demand by letting other stock graze.

Do NOT let AFC drop below 500 kg DM/ha. This is detrimental for grass growth on the farm. Remember grass grows grass. Consult your PastureBase grass budget and update your plan if necessary.

If AFC 500 kg DM/ha now, house animals immediately. Walk the farm again in 2-3 weeks to decide if another paddock should be grazed. Don't start spring on the backfoot by continuing to graze now.

Heavy Rain Challenging Grazing

Heavy rainfall, mainly in the west, is causing difficult grazing conditions. What can we do to maintain grass in the diet? Revert to our Spring grazing rules.

1. Walk the farm daily to identify dry areas to graze, this may be only be certain sections of paddocks.
2. Graze paddocks on the farm that have good access and easy exit back onto farm roadways. Spur roadways are great to get animals to the back of paddocks.
3. 12 hour allocations with a back fence to avoid damaging what has been previously grazed.
4. On—off grazing for 3 hours AM and PM and then standing them off during more sustained spells of rain
5. Animals should be grazing medium covers of (1200 to 1500kg/DM/ha) and 8-10 cm on drystock farms.

Seasonal Forestry Management Tips

Stocking density and replanting requirements

A late frost in May this year caused a lot of damage to foliage on young trees. Frost damage can affect trees to varying degrees, depending on the size of the tree and the timing of the frost, for example:

- a) damage to lower branches – trees recover and don't need any attention;
- b) damage to top bud but tree survives – tree may send up multiple shoots, which may require shaping; and,
- c) tree is damaged all over and is killed – stocking rate should be calculated using 8m circular plots (e.g., if stocking rate is 2,500 per ha then count 50 trees within plot for 100% stocking). Plan for replanting where necessary.

There are other reasons why trees have to be replaced such as animal browsing, competition from vegetation, etc., so all young forests should be monitored.

Check drainage systems

A well-maintained drainage system is important at every stage of a forest's development. Young trees will not survive if their roots are immersed in water for long periods. Good drainage also helps in the stability of the crop. Drains, silt traps, etc., should be checked regularly, but especially after management interventions such as thinning and road building.

Check firebreaks

Dry weather in early spring is when forests are most at risk from fire, especially in upland areas. This risk can continue during dry periods in spring and summer. Now is a good time to check fire breaks and ensure they are kept free of vegetation/fuel

