

Teagasc Notes for the week ending Friday December 15th 2017

Derogation Applications 2018

A very high number of farmers in Waterford and Kilkenny are now applying for a nitrates derogation each year and demand for assistance from Teagasc is also increasing. To ensure that this work is completed by the March 31st closing date it is vital that we start immediately after Christmas. If you need assistance send in the following documentation to your Teagasc office as soon as possible but no later than January 6th.

- Meal statements for 2016.
- Estimated tonnes of feed purchased in 2017.
- Fertiliser statement for 2017.
- Any results for soil analysis completed in recent months.

Gather the information now because when calving commences you will be too busy and it may be forgotten or done too late. If you have been exporting slurry for the last number of years in order to stay under the 170 kg organic nitrogen per ha limit then you should apply for a derogation in 2018.

Prevent silage heating during feed out

The most important requirement for successfully preserving any crop as silage is that it is stored in the absence of air. Thus, silage pits and clamps are covered with plastic sheets, while bales are wrapped in plastic stretch-film in order to store the forage under air-free conditions. However, silages are exposed to air during feed out and thus are prone initially to heating and then to visible growth of mould. Whereas some silages can appear to be stable for several days during feed out, others will show signs of heating and mould growth after only a day or two of exposure to air. In general, silages made from drier and stemmier grass are more prone to deterioration during feed out than those made from wetter and leafier grass. Silages that unfortunately fermented poorly during ensilage (i.e., high pH, butyric acid and ammonia-N) are more stable during feed out than silages that fermented properly (i.e., low pH, high lactic acid). In all cases, silages are more prone to heating when feed out occurs during mild rather than cold weather.

Aerobic deterioration during feed out will reduce silage feed value, with the result that livestock will eat less and the digestibility (DMD) of what they consume will have been reduced (typically by 2-4%). Where heating of the silage is advanced, the spores and toxins produced by moulds growing on the silage can be harmful to both man and beast. Steps to prevent heating during feed out are:

- at harvest time fill pits and clamps quickly, compact the forage and cover and seal quickly – ensure the seal remains secure throughout storage; and,
- at feed out, minimise the duration of access of silage to air. The exposed silage face should be removed for feeding every two to three days. This necessitates that the width and height of the silage feed face matches the number and type of livestock to be fed from the silo. If only some animals are to be fed silage for a short period, it is better to use bales during that time. Cut rather than pull blocks of silage from the face. Retain the plastic sheets tightly in place, but don't pull them down over the silage feed face.

Be Winter Ready

As I write this article the first blast of real winter weather is forecast for next weekend. We usually get the worst of the weather in January so it is vitally important that you check that you and your farm are winter ready now.

Look after your own safety:

- Before going out on your land always tell someone where you are going, and how long you will be gone for.
- Wear suitable layers of clothing.
- Carry a charged mobile phone and a torch.
- Never use a stand-by generator indoors, as fumes from the engine can be lethal.
- Be sure that equipment (for example a chainsaw) which you may not have used for some time is serviced and that you use it correctly.

Cold Weather and Snow

1. Plan how you will get food and water to your stock.
2. Prevent your machinery and water supplies freezing up:
 - have thermostatically controlled heaters in the pump house
 - an insulation blanket/plastic sheet, placed at the entrance to the milking parlour, may help prevent milking machines freezing up
 - drain wash-down pumps
3. Check the antifreeze levels in all your engines.
4. Have a plan to clear routes around your farm buildings, and have a stock of gritting material and salt.
5. When searching for animals in snow, wear high visibility clothing so you can be easily seen.

Flooding on the farm

If your farm is prone to flooding:

1. Move your livestock to areas you can access if flooding risk is high.
2. Carefully assess the depth of floods before driving through them.
3. Only use suitable vehicles if you have to drive through floods.
4. Secure valuable equipment and fuel supplies in suitable locations so that they are not ruined by water.

Electricity

Get a copy of the booklet "Farm Well....Farm Safely" from the ESB Networks website www.esb.ie. It tells you all you need to know about using electric equipment on you farm.

- Stand-by generators. Special regulations apply to the connection and use of generators.
- The connection must be installed by a qualified electrician.
- ESB must be notified of proposed operation of a generator.
- Incorrect connection can cause a back feed posing a risk to yourself, other consumers and maintenance staff.

Important Event

Teagasc Successful Suckling Event

A Teagasc Event on Successful Suckling will take place in the Cillin Hill Mart, Kilkenny on Wednesday, 13th December 3.30 -5.30pm. The event will include a live demonstration of condition scoring of suckler cows by Teagasc advisers; a presentation on Feeding Suckler Cows for Maximum Reproductive Efficiency by Alan Kelly U.C.D. Alan Dillon, Teagasc adviser will relate real farmer experiences of Increasing Efficiency and Output on their Suckler Farms and Kieran Devaney, veterinary surgeon, will speak on Current Suckler Herd Health Issues. This is a Dept. of Agriculture KT approved event. All are welcome.

