

Teagasc Notes for week ended Friday January 18th

Have you enough fodder?

A Teagasc survey in November highlighted that while there was fodder balance in the country, almost 1/3 of all farmers were short 2-2.5 weeks of feed. This will only manifest itself as a problem if we have a late Spring. Two weeks doesn't sound like a lot but if you are looking at the back wall of the silage pit then its a lot.

So what do we need to do now to make sure we are not stressed later in the Spring?

Winter Feed:

1. Make sure to calculate fodder supplies again so that you have enough in the yard to take you through the spring. Contact your local Teagasc advisor if you would like a fodder budget completed for your farm
2. Calculate how much silage you require from March 1st. Calculate whether you will have that at the current rate of feeding. If answer is no, farmers must start/continue to extend fodder supplies using meal, straw etc.. Action needs to be taken now!
3. Continue to extend where silage reserves are short using straw, concentrates etc.
4. Continue to feed young stock concentrates to save silage on your farm



Options to Reduce Demand for Winter Feed:

1. Turn out yearling heifers to out-farms early this spring (target: 1st Feb). Lighter animals should be targeted for early turnout
2. Try and feed milking cows grass and meal alone this spring, rather than supplementing with silage. An effort will have to be made to maximise grass supply and utilisation this spring as a result
3. Make sure to get slurry and urea out when the slurry and fertiliser dates commence where fodder supplies are low. This will help build grass supply on farms
4. Use grazing techniques such as on-off grazing, temporary cow walks and strip grazing with a back fence to maximise grass utilisation and to achieve more days at grass this spring!

Fertiliser Spreading

Make sure to have urea bought and in the yard if the weather comes right for spreading fertiliser!

What is the Required Response to Justify Early N?

Grass in Spring is worth 16 cent per kg DM. If we assume that urea is costing €380 / t or 80 cent per kg N. Therefore the minimum response required to breakeven on spreading fertiliser is 5 kg DM / kg N. In reality, the response in a normal year is 10-15 kg DM / kg N applied. So does it pay, yes is the answer.

Where and when should N be spread?

1. Higher sward grass covers will have higher N uptake rate compared to lower covers. **Spread slurry on lower covers & urea where there is grass cover.**
2. Make sure soil temperature is above 5.5°C (currently 7-10°C nationally)
3. Check the weather forecast regularly
4. Rate: 1/2 bag urea/ acre (30 kgN/ha)
5. Reseeded areas and dry paddocks should be targeted with N first
6. Make sure to have slurry agitated to allow for early spreading (be vigilant)

Why should a farmer spread early N?

1. Increase grass supply where there is a high demand for spring grass
2. Increase grass supply where farmers are potentially short for silage
3. To minimise the cost of supplementary feed such as meal & silage this spring
4. To achieve more days at grass this spring!

Tips to Set Up for Grazing in 2019:

1. **Make sure you have enough reels and temporary posts to be able to manage strip grazing and back-fencing this spring**
2. **Start to set up strip wires now on the paddocks that will be grazed first on the farm. This will reduce the workload when calving commences. Have a plan: 30% target in Feb. Target lower covers for grazing 1st and create a wet weather plan if weather turns difficult! (i.e. identify dry paddocks that will be grazed in wet weather)**
3. **Walk the farm and carry out an opening cover. This will help you:**
 - a. **See what grass supply is like on your farm (identify your initial paddocks for grazing)**
 - b. **Identify dry paddocks with low covers that will be suitable to graze in wet weather**
 - c. **Set up a feed budget on PastureBase Ireland to establish what supplement should be fed along with grass this spring (minimise silage in this budget)**

Events

Joint Teagasc DAFM Cross Compliance Workshop on Monday the 21st January @ 8pm in the Park Hotel Dungarvan. This event is KT approved