

Teagasc Notes for week ended Friday March 22nd

Teagasc Green Acres Calf to Beef Programme

The second phase of the Teagasc Green Acres Calf to Beef Programme is being launched shortly with 12 demonstration farmers located around the country participating. The primary aim of the programme is to achieve a net margin of €500/ha (excluding premia) by advising on and demonstrating best practice at farm level on the rearing, growing and finishing of purchased dairy bred calves through to beef (steers/heifers/bulls) on a whole farm basis.

We are fortunate in Waterford to have one of these demonstration farms in the county. Richard Long farms 57.3ha in Ballymacarbry, where he brings early maturing and continental calves out of the dairy herd to beef as steers and heifers at 20-24 months. In the region of 100 calves are purchased each year and the breeds consist of Angus, Hereford, Limousin, Belgian Blue and Charolais. This year, all of the calves purchased on the farm will be sourced from his brothers' dairy farm in Co. Tipperary. With this arrangement, there's potential for Richard and his brothers, Michael and Liam, to work together in terms of the beef sires being used.

Austin Flavin is the local Teagasc adviser to the farm and Sean Cummins is the Teagasc Green Acres Adviser to the farm. Both will be heavily involved in the programme on the farm.



Grazing Tips for the Week

1. Supplementation levels must reduce (take silage out of diet and reduce meal) to start the 2nd rotation in time (enough grass on farms to graze day and night with 3 kg concentrates)
2. Farmers that have applied 23 units N/acre in January/ early February should **put out 40 units of N when given an opportunity**, & especially where high covers exist to encourage greater regrowth. On low index soils, this should be in the form of a compound fertiliser like 18-6-12. Early P will increase spring growth, promote tillering and aid in the recovery of damaged swards.
3. If weather conditions are wet, make sure to strip graze and back-fence grazed areas. A cow can take in 90% of her overall intake in two 3hr grazing bouts, so on-off grazing can help maximise the proportion of grass in the diet. Graze lower covers in wet weather conditions and move to the driest areas of the farm to maximise grass utilisation

Managing the lambing ewe to improve lamb survival

1. Ensure adequate colostrum intake by the lambs within the first 12 hours of life
2. Inexperienced ewes need all the biological signals to work at the right time to be good mothers: low stress, good nutrition, time to progress, no interference from other ewes
3. Select for sheep that have good survival traits:
 - a. Record
 - b. Cull/don't breed from ewes that have needed birth assistance more than once
4. Give the ewe time and space to do what they need to do - Looking but not doing!

Help the ewe to rear the lamb, so that you don't have to!