

Teagasc Notes for week ended Friday May 10th 2019

Grassland Management over the Coming Months

As we start into the 3rd rotation there are a few key targets to be achieved to keep grass quality and quantity under control over the coming months. Ideally, all farmers would be measuring grass and using that information to make management decisions. In reality for most farmers simply walking the farm on a regular basis to see what grass is on the farm and reacting on time to surpluses ... or deficits as they arise, will go a long way to improving grass utilisation.

Key Targets for the Main Grazing Season:

1. Pre-grazing yield: 1,400 kg DM/ha
2. Cleaning out paddocks to 4 cm (avoid topping)
3. Maintain a 20 day rotation
4. Fertiliser: Protected urea + Sulphur
5. Where grazing covers are greater than 1,600 kgDM/ha - cut for surplus bales

Surplus Bales- Make the Decision to Cut:

1. Grazing heavy covers will reduce performance (milk yield/ ADG) and lead to residuals above 4 cm (poor quality grass next rotation). It can be an indicator of surplus grass on the farm.
2. If you have a grass surplus on the farm take it out of the grazing rotation and cut surplus bales. The sooner it's taken out the sooner it will be back in the rotation.
3. These bales are high quality and needed in next Spring/Autumn

Grass10 Mid-Season Target:

To achieve 10 rotations/paddock/year, the main area that farmers should focus on is the mid-season. Rotation length should shorten when growth rates are high to maintain a pre-grazing yield of 1,400 kg DM/ha.

Early April- Early August = 120 days

1. Target: 6 rotations
2. Average rotation length: 20 days
3. Farmers should target 3 rotations in the next 60 days!!



GROWING 14 TON GRASS DM/ha

Growth Period	Grass Grown/Rotn (kg/ha)	Rotn. Length (days)	No. of Rotations
Feb to Mid Apr	1000	65	1
Mid Apr to Mid Aug	1400	20	2-7
Mid Aug to Mid Sep	1600	30	8
Mid Sep to Mid Oct	1900	35	9
Mid Oct to Mid Nov	1100	35	10
Total Grass production/ha	14000	285	10

Grazing infrastructure on Dairy Farms – Whats Important in Mid-Season

1. Cows should be grazing on 36 hr blocks (no strip wire)
2. Water: As temperatures increase, demand for water is increasing on farms:
 - a. Water intake: 100- 140 litres/cow on warm sunny day
 - b. Drinking time: 30%-50% water intake within one hour of milking
 - c. Trough size: Allow nine litres (two gallons) per cow
 - d. 1,350 litres (300 gallons) for 150 cows
3. Main waterline: 38-42mm internal diameter for 150 cow herd
4. Connecting pipe: 20-25mm internal diameter

Designing the Correct Paddock System on Drystock Farms:

1. Decide on the number of paddocks required on the farm (a minimum of 7 paddocks per livestock group).
2. Set up the paddocks to grow in 3 weeks, graze in 3 days.
3. Determine most appropriate water trough position in each paddock (centre to be able to split paddock again if needed).
4. Install multiple entrances into each paddock.
5. Keep paddocks square/rectangular, depth: width ratio should be 2:1 maximum (reduces damage).
6. Position the paddock entrances on dry ground.
7. Have a paddock entrance on the down-hill corner of the paddock.
8. Record the final layout on an accurate map and hang up in the office.

Reseeding

Growth is currently high on farms, which provides farmers with an ideal opportunity to reseed underperforming pasture. Here are a few simple tips to ensure you carry out a successful reseed:

1. Soil test– See where the paddock is in terms of lime, P & K
2. Prepare a firm, fine seed bed regardless of cultivation technique
3. Choose suitable varieties from the Pasture Profit Index and use the correct sowing rate
4. Spread lime and N, P and K (2.5 tonnes lime/acre and 3 bags 10-10-20 in most cases)
5. Roll after sowing– seed soil contact
6. Post emergence spray– this is crucial to pre-vent weeds from emerging in the sward. If the seed mix includes clover, use a clover friendly post emergence spray
7. Graze at a low cover (1000kg-1200kg) (8-9cm) and graze down to 3.5 -4 cm (promote tillering)