

Teagasc Notes for the week ending Friday November 24th 2017

Dairying

Managing the Spring Workload on Dairy Farms

Last week there was an excellent attendance at a Teagasc farm walk on the Kinsella Farm, Clogga, Mooncoin to hear Teagasc advisers and specialists address the issue of spring workload on dairy farms. There was great discussion and many valuable ideas and suggestions put forward.

Calving & calving facilities:

- The area for cows pre-calving must be suitable including calving gates, calving camera etc. and preferably with access to a slatted area for feeding. Easy movement of calves to the calf house is required e.g. calf trolley.
- Large herds should consider a dedicated person for night shift.
- Use easy calving sires.
- Calf health – vaccinations. 2/3 of the herd on the host farm will be vaccinated for scours in 2018.
- Have a fridge to store colostrum and a means of heating it in the calving area. Ensure calves get 3 litres colostrum in the first 2 hours.
- Reduce night time calving by feeding silage at night.
- Use a dumpline or pump to move milk from the parlour to the calf house or use milk replacer which costs the equivalent of about 26c/litre.
- Consider once a day feeding of calves once they are 3 weeks old.
- Use calf feeders – large feeders on wheels etc. reduces labour requirement.
- Automatic feeders have a role to play. Cost around €10,000 + VAT for 2 stations.
- Sell calves out of the yard to a designated buyer, at a designated time. This saves time spent at marts.
- How early are you getting to grass?
- Possible to eliminate meal feeding at grass from mid-May onwards.

Milking & milking facilities:

- Improve the cow flow into and out of the parlour if necessary.
- Milk cows once a day for the first 4 weeks. This will result in a 4% reduction over the full lactation but will greatly reduce workload at the busiest time.
- Match the parlour to the herd size. Aim for no more than 8 rows of cows.
- Target starting time for milking (clusters on) – 7 am & 4.20 pm.
- Use automatic cluster removers for larger herds.
- Install an autowasher.
- Install a backing gate in collecting yard.
- Install drafting facilities – automatic drafting if possible.
- The target time spent cleaning after milking should be less than 20 minutes. Time savers include mechanical scraping, a good hosing system, and a slatted area exiting the parlour.
- Put a foot bath in the area where cows exit.
- Have written instructions for milking in the parlour (laminated) so that others can also do the job.

Other ways to reduce workload:

- Use a contractor with an umbilical system of slurry spreading. It is possible to spread 30,000 gallons/hour where good conditions prevail i.e. large fields etc. Need watery slurry. Cost €110-120/hour.
- Fertilizer spread by contractor – blanket application across grazing area and/or silage ground.
- Contract rearing of heifers costs approximately €1.25/day from stage where calf is reared to start of second winter - €700 total.
- Reduce enterprises – maximise milk production on the milking platform (target 3.3 cows/ha). Overall dairy area including silage ground target 2.5 LU/ha. Minimise groups of cattle and simplify the system. Do not rent an out farm to keep beef animals.

- Use mobile phone apps to record events on farm e.g. calf registration, cows in heat, AI dates, administration of medicines. Cost €100 +/-year .
- Have a dedicated farm office. The office should have a laminated farm map (colour coded for lime, P & K), all farm records filed etc. Office work should be done early in day. **Employing labour:**
- If you are working more than 60 hours/week then you need assistance.
- Family members may be able to fill the gap.
- Part-time person to do jobs in morning/evening e.g. clean cubicles, feed calves, move cows to calving area.
- FRS - €44/milking (2 hours) & €14.75/hour for general work – higher rates apply to Sundays etc. Need to plan labour requirement.
- Full time employee – need to match what is being paid in other sectors.
- Register for the Teagasc Supervising People on your Dairy Farm course to improve your people management skills and increase the chance of retaining labour. Talk to your adviser.

Ensuring good spring milk yield:

- 80% - 90% of cows calved in 6 weeks.
- Have adequate grass cover at the start of winter 600 kg DM/ha average farm cover. The best covers on dry fields for early grazing should have 1000+ kg DM/ha now.
- On-off grazing in February. 3 hours after each milking.
- High quality baled silage for spring – at least 1 bale/cow.
- Walk the farm weekly during the grazing season.

Important Events

Teagasc National Dairy Conference - Kilkenny

The Teagasc National Dairy Conference will take place on Tuesday, 28 November at the Lyrath Estate Hotel, Kilkenny commencing at 9.00am. The theme of this year's conference is Seizing Opportunities for a Better Future.

Sean Molloy, Glanbia will outline both the challenges and opportunities faced by Glanbia in the marketplace and he will also present the findings from a recent Glanbia supplier survey. Workload and labour are now big issues on dairy farms. Paidi Kelly, Teagasc will outline the six key strategic actions required by the dairy industry to meet this challenge. Margaret Dorgan, Consultant will address managing labour and Phil Purcell, Kilkenny dairy farmer will discuss his labour strategies for spring 2018. The final session will provide attendees with the opportunity to hear some of the more recent results from the comprehensive research programme at Teagasc.

Book your place now at <https://www.teagasc.ie/news-events/dairy-conference/>. All are welcome.

Teagasc Beef Seminar - Dungarvan

A Teagasc Beef Seminar will be held in the Park Hotel, Dungarvan on Thursday, November 30th at 7.30pm. We are very lucky to have been able to engage Sean Kelly MEP to address Waterford beef farmers on Renewal of the CAP and the Future of BPS Payments. Phelim O'Neill, Farmers Journal will speak on Irish Beef Prices and Market Outlook and Brian Garry, Teagasc Nutritionist will discuss Feeding Strategies for Cattle this Winter. All are welcome

