

## Teagasc Notes for the week ending Friday October 13<sup>th</sup> 2017

### Dairying

#### Managing high SCC in late lactation

While maximising production and selling as much milk as possible may be a priority this autumn, turning a blind eye to animals with a high SCC, i.e., subclinically infected, could prove to be a very costly exercise. In fact, sacrificing quality over quantity is a false economy. These cows are not producing milk to their full potential because infection has damaged some of the mammary tissue, and to make matters worse, they will remain a constant source of infection in your herd. So how should you deal with them?

1. The first thing to do is to milk record the whole herd, and identify any high SCC cows, i.e., SCC >200,000 cells/ml. While milk recording might be seen as an extra cost, it can be more expensive not to. Without measuring the SCC of each cow individually, there is no way of knowing who the infected ones are. One alternative to milk recording is to use the California mastitis test (CMT) on the whole herd – but don't forget to record all the results.
2. High SCC cows should be marked and milked last to minimise disease spread. If it is not possible to run them as a separate herd, hold them back and milk them as the last row. This will prevent them infecting other cows.
3. Remove the source of infection. Consider drying high SCC cows off early, to give them the best chance of curing and to reduce the impact on your bulk tank SCC.
4. Develop a culling list of cows that have had recurring high SCC and mastitis problems and are unlikely to cure. Consider culling cows that have had high SCC for two consecutive lactations, despite antibiotic dry cow therapy.

#### Drying off cows

Many farmers will start to dry off spring-calving cows during October. Some farmers struggle with this job, resulting in poor cure rates during the dry period and cows calving down with a higher cell count than at drying off. Poor dry off procedures will increase both the number of cows with elevated cell counts at calving and the number of cows developing mastitis in the first 30 days next spring. Yield will be reduced and both treatment costs and workload will be increased as a result.

It pays to implement a correct drying off procedure.

1. Dry off in batches of 10. Remember if using a teat sealer with the dry cow tube, 80 tubes will be applied to these 10 cows. If drying greater numbers, then you need to get additional help. Plan for the time and labour that drying off takes.
2. Draft out a group of cows, and leave until the end of milking.
3. Clean out parlour and organise tubes, methylated spirits plus cotton wool. Make sure to keep the tubes sterile, do not remove the cap until ready to use.
4. Go and have some breakfast.
5. Get a new set of gloves for drying off.
6. Completely disinfect the end of each teat. Start with front teats and clean with cotton wool and methylated spirits.
7. Treat the teats nearest you first, followed by treatment of more distant teats.
8. Teat dip or spray all teats immediately after treatment.
9. Mark each cow dried off with spray marker, take note of number and dry off date.
10. Keep cows standing for at least two hours after treatment. Don't allow cows to lie down in dirty yards, roadways, fields or housing.

Take time this autumn to dry off cows correctly.

#### Effect of autumn closing date on spring grass accumulation

PastureBase stores all grassland measurements in a central database. This facilitates the quantification of grass growth and DM production (total and seasonal) across the country. In a recent analysis of 1,300 paddock measurements, the database demonstrated some key messages on closing up for the winter. Data from PastureBase was used to examine the effect of a closing date in

either October or November on the amount of grass available for grazing in the latter half of March. It is obvious from Table 1 that earlier closing (early October) resulted in much higher availability of grass compared to closing seven weeks later (November 23). Every week delay in closing resulted in a loss of almost 80kg DM/ha of grass available in March. It is essential to have grass in the herd's diet to lower the costs of production and increase milk price (higher milk protein content). Therefore, some paddocks must be closed in early October to ensure grass availability in early 2018.

**Table 1: Benefits of earlier closing for availability of grass**

Closing date	October 2	October 10	October 23	November 6	November 23
Grass available in 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of March (kg DM/ha)	1,118	1,069	873	715	673

## Important Events

### Teagasc National Beef Conference

The Teagasc National Beef Conference will take place in the Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup> from 3.00pm to 8.00pm. Admission is free. Speakers from Teagasc and UCD will discuss fluke control, breeding, grassland management and nutrition. All are welcome.

### Kildalton Open Source Sustainable Dairy Farm Open Day

Teagasc & Glanbia Ireland are holding an Open Day for dairy farmers on the Kildalton Open Source Sustainable Demonstration Farm, Piltown, Co. Kilkenny on Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> October from 10am to 2pm. At the Open Day, the key components of sustainable dairying will be explained and demonstrated.

#### ***Among the topics that will be covered are:***

- Sustainability in the market place
  - Sustainable dairy herd management
  - Soil fertility and nutrient management
  - Grassland Management
  - Protecting Biodiversity and water quality
  - Energy and water use efficiency
  - Animal welfare
  - Slurry and fertiliser technologies that improve efficiency and reduce emissions
  - Management tools and technologies for improving the efficiency and sustainability of the dairy farm
- Staff from across Teagasc, Glanbia and Bord Bia will be available to discuss all aspects of sustainable dairy farm management. All are welcome.