

Teagasc Notes for the week ending Friday October 6th 2017

Beef

Autumn grazing plan

It is important to put in place a simple grazing plan for the remainder of the year so that cattle can remain outdoors at grass for as long as possible, while at the same time ensuring that there is a bank of grass built up for turning stock out early in the spring. Aim to close a proportion of the farm each week starting in the first half of October. The percentage you close each week will depend on whether you are on a dry farm or on a heavy, slow grass-growing farm. Farms that have poor winter growth will need to close earlier to give the grass a longer amount of time to grow. A simple rule to follow is that dry farms should close their first fields around October 10 and have 60% of the farm closed by the first week in November. The remaining 40% is then grazed in November. Heavy or slow grass growing farms should start closing a week earlier and have 60% of their farm grazed by the last week in October. By following this plan the amount of stock left at grass will be determined by the amount of grass there is left to be grazed on those fields not yet closed. If you find you are going to graze out fields too quickly (and are likely to exceed the 60% closed by your target date), then some stock need to be housed. If you find that you are not likely to hit the target proportions grazed by the dates set, you may have to graze some lighter covers of grass first – otherwise too many fields will be grazed too late and spring grass covers will be reduced. House priority stock first, e.g., cattle close to finish. Lighter stock, e.g., weanlings/calves, should be the last stock that you house, as these will do the least amount of damage if there is a lot of wet weather.

Adverse weather

For those who have been suffering from the persistent rain and poor ground conditions, the thought of closing fields in rotation is merely wishful thinking. Stock may already be housed much earlier than normal. This will put winter feed supplies under pressure. It is important, if you think that you will be short of silage this winter, that you act now.

There are some things you need to do:

1. Assess the quantity and quality of fodder available. Delayed cutting dates on farms will leave quality below what you would normally like.
2. Calculate your winter feed requirements. What type and numbers of stock are you going to carry through the winter? Will you have a surplus or deficit of fodder available?
3. Decide on the options you have available. If you have more than 50% of your silage requirements on hand then there are options. Buying extra silage/hay or straw may not necessarily be the best option unless they are good value. Cereals and rations may offer better value.
4. If cash flow is going to be under pressure, act promptly in dealing with banks/merchants.

Routine housing treatments

Housing is one of the best times of the year for treating cattle against some of the more common internal and external parasites. Most beef farmers treat their cattle around housing, but there are so many products now on the market that it can be confusing as to which product to use and how best to use it. Some farmers also have products left over from earlier in the year and these also need to be considered. Products vary in price, in what they control and in how they are given to the animal.

Whichever product you are going to use, you need to ask yourself:

- will type II stomach worms be controlled?;
- will lice be covered?;
- do I need to cover for liver fluke?;
- how convenient is it to give the product?;
- how long after housing do I need to wait before giving the treatment?;
- will I need to give a second treatment and when?;
- could rumen fluke be an issue?;

- how long is the withdrawal period with any of the products used?; and,
- what will the overall cost per animal be?

All of the avermectin (any product that has an active ingredient ending with 'mectin'), and all of the benzimidazole (mostly white drench products) will control type II stomach worms and lungworms. The levamisole products (mostly the clear or yellow drenches) will not kill type II stomach worms and should not be used. Some of the combination worm/fluke drenches are levamisole based and so should not be used for a housing dose. The avermectin products will also control sucking lice. If you are using a benzimidazole wormer you will also need to give a lice treatment. Depending on the amount of lice present, many of the lice only treatments recommend a second treatment a number of weeks later.

On farms that have to treat for fluke, the key thing to watch is the product used. Some products only control adult fluke, whereas others will also control immature fluke. Only a small number control early immatures. Know which type you are using; otherwise, you may only be killing a proportion of the fluke present. Many farmers will treat for fluke a couple of weeks after housing (along with their stomach worm and hoose treatment) and again later in the winter to pick up those not covered. Otherwise, you have to wait too long to give the fluke treatment to make sure that they are all killed with just one treatment.

Important Event

Teagasc Forestry Advisory Clinics

Teagasc will recommence its very popular nationwide series of Forestry Advisory Clinics in October to facilitate as many farmers and other landowners as possible. The first series of the Waterford clinics will take place on Tuesday, the 10th of October in the Teagasc offices, Shandon, Dungarvan. This clinic will be held in the Teagasc offices from 10 am to 4 pm, where a one-to-one consultation with an experienced forestry adviser can be arranged by appointment. Some issues you may like to discuss

- Opportunities for farmers and other landowners under the Forestry Programme 2014-2020
- Available grants and premiums
- Interaction with other farm schemes, e.g. BPS, GLAS, etc.
- How forestry can improve farm income and the environment
- How to apply and get the job done right first time

The forestry programme also offers landowners, who are not farming, the opportunity to avail of the same annual planting premiums as farmers. Prior booking of a one to one forestry consultation is essential. For further information and to book an individual consultation contact the Teagasc office, Dungarvan at 058-41211. Please bring maps and other relevant information on the day to optimise the advisory experience and outcome.

