

## **Teagasc Notes for the week ending Friday September 1<sup>st</sup> 2017**

### **Up to €8,000 additional income available next Spring**

If you need some additional income and have the time available there is an opportunity for farm family members (male or female) to earn up to €8,000 next Spring working through the Farm Relief Service on a dairy farm. Many farm family members are experienced stock persons and competent tractor drivers so you have most, if not all of the skills required to assist on a dairy farm. The hours available are flexible so you can choose the hours to fit around the work on your own farm or in the home. Work is available close to home so there will be no time wasted commuting. The peak time of year is January to June each year.

Paid training will be provided in conjunction with Teagasc, Kildalton College, if you need to develop milking skills. However there are many other jobs to be done on a dairy farm besides milking for which farm family members are very suited such as calf rearing, calving supervision, feeding and bedding stock, spreading fertiliser etc. If this opportunity interests you please phone the Farm Relief Service for more information. Waterford FRS 051-294277; Kilkenny FRS 056-7761671

### **Beef**

#### **Have you managed to extend your rotation length?**

Grazing rotation length should be extended to 35 days by mid-September. The reasons for doing this are to allow for extra days at grass in the autumn/winter, while also ensuring that paddocks can be closed in rotation from October to allow for early spring grazing. By extending the rotation length in autumn, we are 'pushing' out the growth curve and building a bank of grass for the autumn.

So if we are looking at a 35-day rotation, no more than one-fifth of the farm should be grazed each week. If you are going around faster than this, what can you do to slow things down? All silage ground should be back in for grazing. If there is remaining fertiliser in the budget, spread 30 units of nitrogen (N), with phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) if soil tests allow, as soon as possible and before the nitrates spreading deadline of September 15. Consider selling stock earlier or supplementing with meal at grass to reduce demand. Weaning calves and creep feeding will also reduce demand.

#### **What about lime?**

While lime can be spread at any time of year, autumn provides a great opportunity for spreading. High annual rainfall leads to a large removal of lime each year. Because of this soils have a maintenance requirement of 2.5- 5t of lime/ha every five years. Applying lime at that rate would cost €25/ha/year but would yield an extra one tonne of grass DM/ha worth €181/ha/year. At farm level, every €100 spent on lime returns €700 in extra grass production.

#### **Have you used a post-emergence spray on new reseeds?**

Applying a herbicide to a new grass ley is the most cost-effective spray you will use on that field. Control of docks, thistles and chickweed, etc., is much easier when these weeds are seedlings. Product choice is decided by the presence or absence of clover in the new ley. Clover-safe products include Legumex DB, Undersown DB Plus, Clovex, Triad and Underclear. Starane 2, Binder, Hurler and Reaper are not

clover safe. Remember straight versions of CMPP (Duplosan, Optica, etc.) and MCPA are no longer registered for use on grass.

### **Do I need to spray my new 'clean' reseed?**

- Yes (in most cases) as there are up to 1 00,000 dock seeds per acre ready to germinate in fields.
- Yes as you will kill all weeds more easily when they are seedlings.
- Yes as you will maximise your investment. Teagasc research shows that reseed sprays provide very good control of docks for four years after application, whereas spraying mature docks provides control for just one year.

### **Help the spray work:**

- have an even, vigorously growing sward;
- apply the herbicide onto small, actively growing weeds (e.g., dock leaf = size of €2 coin);  
spray six to eight weeks after reseeding when there are three leaves on the grass and one true leaf on the clover;
- avoid spraying in very dry or cold conditions (talk to your adviser/merchant if this is the case);
- keep water rates high: 220-350L/ha (20-30 gallons per acre); and, remember to keep the prescribed cross-compliance records and follow the product label.

### **Herd check**

Take a good hard look at your suckler cows. Which cows are costing you money and which cows are costing you the most money? The first category is dead cows (€ 1,300+). It's easy to forget these but better to avoid deaths and cull old cows or cows not fit for the system. A dead cow costs money due to the obvious loss through cull value and cost of disposal. But what about a lost calf if in calf and reduced calf performance if calf at foot?

The next in terms of cost are barren, empty or 'recycled' cows. Call them what you like, they are costing at least €700/head. Most of this cost is the loss of sale of a weaned calf. It does not cover costs that are likely to occur due to them getting too fat, having calving difficulties, or failing to get in calf again. If you haven't scanned already, scan now and make plans for their departure. The next cows to cull are late-calving cows. These are costing over €300 each. This cost is mostly coming from the cost of a lighter weanling, so this group of cows should also include any cows producing light/poor weanlings (check against replacement index value). Having a good replacement strategy either breed plenty of your own with a high replacement value or buy in high replacement value heifers. When buying replacements or any stock you risk the introduction of disease into your herd. The risks increase with the number of animals bought and the number of herds from which they come. Animal Health Ireland (AHI) has detailed how you can reduce these risks through seven simple steps. Further details can be found on their website – [www.animalhealthireland.ie](http://www.animalhealthireland.ie)

## **Important Event**

**Grow more – Graze more – Earn more**

**A Teagasc Glanbia Dairy Farm Walk** will take place on the farm of **Denis Lahart, Goodwinsgarden, Kells, Co. Kilkenny** on **Friday September 1<sup>st</sup> at 11.00am**.  
Teagasc advisers and specialists will discuss building up grass this autumn, improving soil fertility and improving grazing infrastructure. All are welcome.