

Shinagh Dairy Farm Report 04-05-2018

Profitable Science Based Farming

Farm Update

17.91 ha of the farm are now closed for silage. This received the equivalent of 2 bags of Urea per acre (90 units of N) before early April in the form of slurry and Urea. This ground was grazed once since this application. We estimate half this nitrogen is still available for the silage crop. It has now got a top up of 1.5 bags of ASN (39 units per acre) plus 1 bag per acre of 24:2.5:10. This brings the total nitrogen for this first cut to 108 units per acre. We are conscious that even with the slurry on this ground that we owe it P and K for this silage cut. First cut silage removes the equivalent of 3 bags of 0:7:30 per acre.

60.29 ha remain available for grazing. We expect to cut some of this for bale silage when growth exceeds demand. Currently 254 milking cows are grazing on this. That is a stocking rate of 4.21 cows per hectare. Cows are being fed 2.5 kg of ration per day so the grass demand is 15kg of drymatter per cow per day, giving a total grass demand of 63kg drymatter per ha per day. Ration will be reduced further as growth improves until we have a demand of 70-75 kg DM per ha per day. Magnesium and minerals will be fed to cows by adding them to the water troughs, and with additional dusting of paddocks with calmag in wet weather. Grazing ground has got 1.5 bags per acre of ASN (26% N: 14% S) this round. This will be its total application of sulphur for the year. We do it this way to ensure all land gets sufficient sulphur. Applying sulphur with each nitrogen application requires a system to ensure that all ground gets sufficient sulphur.

We have surplus milking cows currently as the plan is to milk the same number of cows as in 2017, which was an average of 232 cows with 239 cows milked at peak. The heifer calves are due to go to the contract rearer next week. They are all weaned and ready to go to grass. AI started today with the breeding heifers. They will be heat detected and bred to AI for the first 7 days and those that have not been bred will then get an injection of prostaglandin to bring the remainder on heat. They will be bred to AI for this heat and then they will all run with stock bulls to catch any repeats. Usually we get 70-75% of the heifers going in calf to AI. These heifers are all cross bred heifers and they are being bred to easy calving (bulls with a calving survey) high EBI Friesian AI bulls.

Breeding started on the cows today also. We have selected a panel of high EBI bulls using SIRE Advice on the ICBF website that will further improve the genetic merit of the daughters we produce. Most of the herd are either Jersey or Norwegian Red cross bred at this stage and those cows will all get Friesian AI straws. The remainder non cross bred Friesian cows will be crossed with a high EBI Jersey AI sire. We always use GENE Ireland bulls as part of our AI breeding programme too. There are 18 cows being milked once a day to help them gain condition and come in heat in the first three weeks. All cows are tail painted as a heat detection aid and this will be kept topped up regularly.

The herd is milking 21.17 litres at 4.13% fat, 3.60% protein (5.03 % lactose, 102,000 SCC and 17,000 TBC). That's 1.74kg per cow per day. Farm cover is 823Kg/DM/ha or 195 kg/DM per cow. We are grazing covers of 1600 kg/ha and are 5 days away from starting the third round. Ground conditions are still tender especially on paddocks that were grazed in difficult conditions the first time.

Updates are on the Shinagh website: <http://www.shinaghdairy.ie/>