

Shinagh Dairy Farm Report 13-03-2020

Farm Update

There are 192 cows calved. Planned start of calving was 9-Feb (based on a 282 day gestation length) Calving started on Feb 3rd and 39 animals (cows and heifers) were calved by the 9th Feb, that's 17% of the herd. 83% of the eventual milking herd is calved at this stage in 5 weeks 4 days. 100 calves are gone to the contract rearer in Rosscarbery. These calves will leave there at weaning and we have negotiated a separate contract to rear these to 13 months of age on another farm. The plan is to then sell them on the market at that stage in April 2021. The reason for going this route this year is to investigate this and produce reliable information on the costs and returns of this system. We are looking to the future in case calf exports will either not be allowed from Ireland or Holland as our main calf importer will not be allowed by their own government to import stock and increase their carbon emissions as a consequence. In either of these scenarios these calves will have to be reared in Ireland. We hope this will never happen but we want to have information on contract rearing the calves to 13 months in case this does happen.

Cows are grazing (going into covers of 1600kg/ha) day and night when it is possible, at the moment and getting 5kg of a 16% ration. The diet is approximately 5kg of ration, 5 kg of grass and 5 kg of silage (if they are housed) Our grazing area per day is based on our spring rotation plan, where we plan to have all the farm grazed for the 7th April. We got 27% of the farm grazed by the 1st of March. We have slowed down since due to weather and are now behind on our target grazed at 48% grazed to date. Our target is 1% of the farm grazed per day in Feb and 2% grazed per day in March. To try to this target we had to graze lighter covers. This is the ground that needs time to grow to be ready for grazing at the start of the second rotation. These paddocks are recovering well and we will monitor their recovery to see will we adjust the end of the first rotation. We will feed more to the herd (meal and silage) if we need to slow down and delay the start of the second rotation. We will reduce feed if the early grazed paddocks are growing well and will be above 1100 at the start of the second rotation.

The herd was milked once a day up until Mar 2nd when a student (Dan) joined the team. It is being milked twice a day since then. Kevin, Alan Murphy (Our new second in command) and Dan are working on the farm currently. The current co-op milk details are as follows: 23.4 litres/day at 4.39% fat, 3.45% protein, 4.91% lactose, 110,000 SCC and 14,000 TBC. That's 1.89 kg of milk solids per day. This test was taken when the cows were back in at night on silage and the protein dropped from 3.60% in the previous collection when they had less silage in the diet. They are currently on high quality baled silage. We have gone Chlorine free in the bulk tank wash since August of 2019 and are using up the last of our chlorine based machine detergent and will be chlorine free washing of the machine from April.

The paddocks that did not get slurry got 0.5bag of urea in mid-January and everything has got 0.75 bags of protected urea in early March. We are only using protected urea as our urea nitrogen source. This is to reduce our emissions, and reduce the carbon footprint. 33% of the farm has got 2,000 gallons of slurry per acre, which went on the low grass covers, and these paddocks did not get the initial 0.5 bag of urea. All slurry is being applied using a trailing shoe slurry spreader.