

# Derrypatrick Farm Notes week beginning 09/10/2017

## General details

As highlighted in last week's notes, weaning on this farm is carried out by removing 1/3 of the cows from each grazing group with 3-4 days given before removing the next 1/3. Keeping the calves in a familiar surrounding reduces stress that occurs around weaning and has led to little or no animal health issues at weaning in previous years with the herd. The first 1/3 of cows, 1<sup>st</sup> calvers and thin cows (group 1), were removed from each grazing group on Monday while the second 1/3 (group 2) of cows were removed on Thursday and once removed, cows were housed and will remain indoors until next week. Cows will return to grass 4/5 days after weaning, weather depending. We aim to complete weaning early next week. Calves are being offered concentrate supplementation ca. 1kg/head/day during the weaning process.

We began closing paddocks on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October and our target is to graze 8ha (12.7%) of the farm per week in order to have 60% of the farm grazed by the end of the first week of November. Last week, we exceeded this target as cattle grazed 8.8ha (13.8%) of the farm. Grass demand has decreased this week due to the housing of cows during weaning and therefore, should see a lower area of the farm grazed this week. The paddocks that have been closed first are those targeted for early turnout next spring i.e. close to the farm yard for turnout of weanlings and sheltered paddocks for turnout of cows and calves.

Silage pits were sampled 4 weeks ago and dry matter digestibility (DMD) results have returned from the lab and are presented in Table 1. Silage from pits 2 and 6 were 1<sup>st</sup> cut silage while the remaining pits (5, 3) were 2<sup>nd</sup> cut silage. The benefit of grazing pasture in spring ahead of closing for silage is evident by the silage results in Table 1. Silage in pit 2 was harvested from pasture un-grazed in spring while pit 6 was harvested from pasture grazed in spring. While the magnitude of the difference in silage quality (DMD%) is not to the extent previously reported in Grange from grazing pasture ahead of 1<sup>st</sup> cut silage, this 3% may be the difference in offering concentrate or not, over the winter period. It is important to note, although not grazed in spring, the area harvested for silage in pit 2 was grazed tight the previous autumn.

Pit	Cut Date	DM %	DMD %	Target animals
2	25/05/2017	24	70	Weanlings/Rep heifers
6	01/06/2017	34	73	Weanlings/Rep heifers
5	13/07/2017	21	69	Cows
3	17/07/2017	18	68	Cows

Table 1.

## Grassland management

- Farm cover: 790kg DM/ha
- Growth: 25 kgDM/ha/day
- Demand: 33 kgDM/ha/day
- Days ahead: 23
- Percentage of farm closed: 14%



Picture 1. Cow group 1 housed following weaning



Picture 2. Cow group 2 housed following weaning



Picture 3. Calves creep grazing ahead of cows that remain at grass



Picture 4. Managing difficult grazing conditions by offering 24 hour grass allocations