

Closing for winter from here on in

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A good forecast this week might see cattle come out of sheds in the midlands and west, though many will elect to leave them in. Weanling heifers or steers would be ideal candidates to turn out, leaving heavier cows inside.

With an average growth rate of 43kg DM/ha daily recorded across the country last week, lots of drier farms will still be growing more grass than they

can eat and thus building covers.

However, the notion of eating any grass that comes back behind cattle should be put into hibernation for the winter. From here on in, any field that cattle come out of should not take animals again in 2017.

Yes, grass is still growing well and hopefully when the current rotation finishes after a settled six weeks, there will be grass blowing in the wind on the paddocks we clean out today.

This grass is your spring feed. Two-thirds of the grass that we have in spring will grow

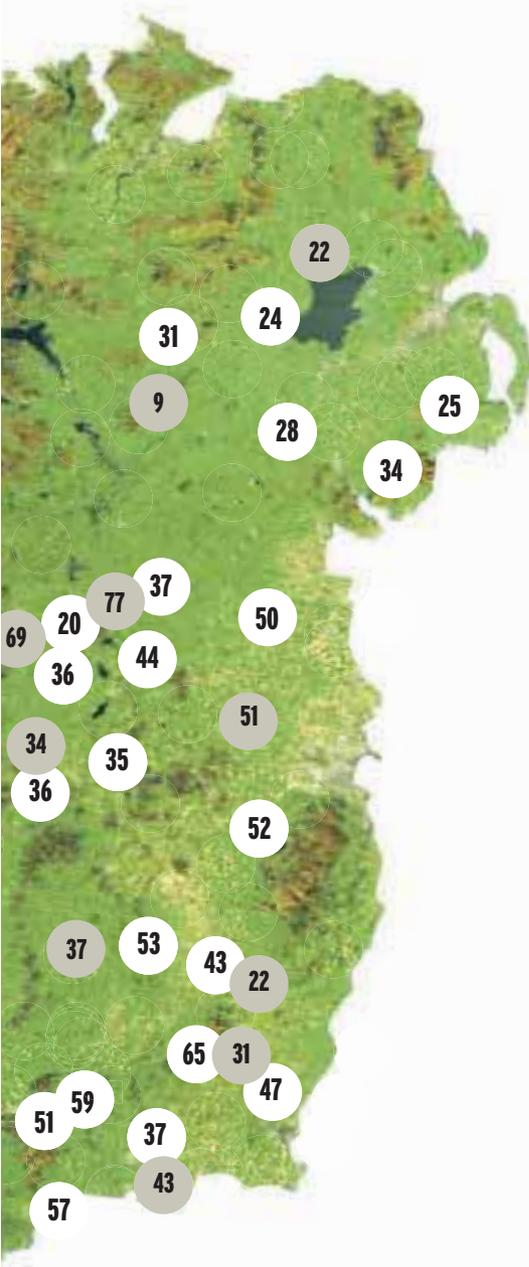
in the next four weeks. We need to set ourselves up to get animals out early should weather permit. That's not putting them in a bare field with a ring feeder – that's turning them into decent covers of grass. Every day they get outdoors is an extra €2.80/hd in our pocket.

The important target for building up a spring wedge of grass is to have 60% of the farm grazed as tightly as possible and closed up by the first week of November.

Fast-forward to next spring. Which paddocks do you go to with light stock first? Which

paddocks do you get cows and calves to first? These should be the ones you're grazing now. Also think about the fields that you will be most likely to travel on for slurry spreading early in the spring. Aim to be grazing these later in November – hopefully right before you turn cattle in.

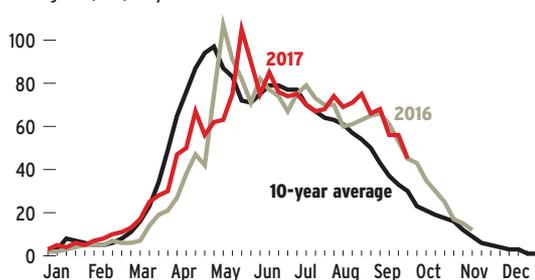
With a dry spell in, consider spreading MOP (0-0-50) on any closed fields that are low in soil potassium (K). This has been one of the key messages at the Teagasc Grass10 walks so far. A rate of one bag to the acre will typically lift K status by one index value.



Source: PastureBase Ireland, Agrinet and Irish Farmers Journal.

10-year average grass growth

kg DM/ha/day



Tom Bolger
Co Carlow

System	suckler to store
Soil type	free draining
Avg farm cover (kg DM/ha)	642
Grass demand (kg DM/ha/day)	32
Growth (kg DM/ha/day)	22

Grass growth has really slowed down the last two weeks with the continuing bad weather. Thankfully grazing conditions have started to improve this week and from next week on I will start closing up paddocks to ensure I will have grass for early spring turnout. I have half my cows weaned and the rest of them will be weaned in the coming weeks. The cows that are weaned will be used to graze out paddocks fully before closing as long as the weather allows. As a precaution against grass tetany, cows are being supplemented with straw and they also have access to magnesium licks. All weanlings will be given their booster shot for pneumonia at the weekend. I weighed my steers this week and I am very happy with their weights. I will pick a group of the heaviest and start meal-feeding them soon. A reseed I put in about six weeks ago is really struggling to kick off and could do with a spell of good weather. There was water lying on it at the beginning of the week.



Dwayne Stanley
Co Tipperary

System	suckler to steer/calf to beef
Soil type	Variable
Avg farm cover (kg DM/ha)	853
Grass demand (kg DM/ha/day)	37
Growth (kg DM/ha/day)	21

There was some interesting discussion at our Grass10 farm walk on Tuesday. The group was brought into a paddock that I was forced to leave a day early last week. It's one of the wettest areas on the farm and there are 46 dairy-cross calves (c.250kg) grazing it in rotation. There was superficial damage done and still a good cover of grass on the paddock, between 6cm and 8cm. Some of the grass had been dirtied.

Ground was and remains soft, with a good give in it. I am a couple of days from officially beginning to close up, but the topic of contention was whether I would go back into it when I come back around if October and November are decent from a weather point of view.

Some of the attendees would have gone back in, others said that they would give it the winter to recover and try and eat it early in the spring, then take a cut of silage off of it. It would probably need rolling to allow that. There is also an option to top it next year when the chance comes.



Matthew Murphy
Newford Herd

System	suckler to beef
Soil type	dry to heavy
Avg farm cover (kg DM/ha)	1,020
Grass demand (kg DM/ha/day)	13
Growth (kg DM/ha/day)	20

Everything is weaned now. All cows are in and thankfully we have been able to get weanlings back out and leave them out. They're getting 2kg of a simple 16% crude protein ration, fed on the roadways to prevent damage. In terms of the ground, the calves aren't doing any damage, but utilisation is quite poor.

We're feeding the finishing cattle on the roadways too. If we weren't able to do so they would undoubtedly be indoors. They're getting 5kg of a beef mix.

We have 47 bullocks altogether, 27 in the shed and 20 outdoors. I hope to begin drafting the outdoor ones for slaughter in a fortnight. The indoor ones will take more feeding to get finished. Twenty heifers are also outdoors for finishing and another six from this group are going to the factory today. The farm has surpassed 14t of grass grown per ha on average already this year. This is ranging from lime-hungry plots on the new outfarm growing less than ten, right up to an Abergain monoculture doing over 20t.



Sean Hayes
Co Clare

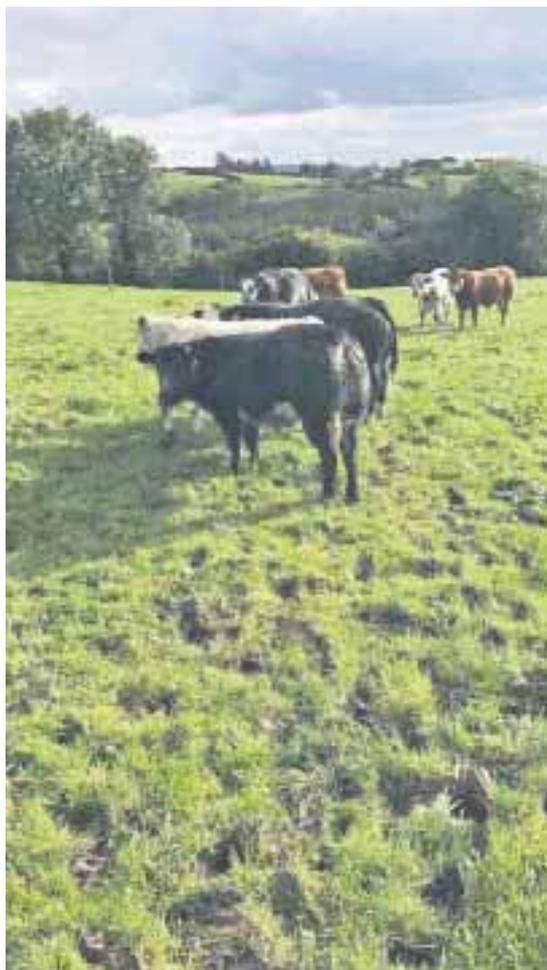
System	suckler to beef
Soil type	variable
Avg farm cover (kg DM/ha)	NA
Grass demand (kg DM/ha/day)	NA
Growth (kg DM/ha/day)	NA

Ground is wet and even lighter stock are beginning to poach some of the heavier paddocks. I have weaned the majority of spring-calving cows and they will return to rough ground once they have dried off sufficiently. Weaned calves are content outdoors so hopefully I'll be able to keep them out for another week or two at least. I had hoped to get lime out but the chances of that happening are extremely slim given the current ground conditions.

I'm split-calving here so I'm gearing up for the breeding season with the autumn calvers at the minute. I've decided to go with just Charolais and Limousin sires this time around to streamline my system going forward. I'm choosing Limousin bulls positive for milk with a high reliability figure, hoping to get heifers on the ground as replacements. On the terminal side, I'm looking out for good conformation and a high carcase weight as I'll be finishing bulls under 16 months. Ease of calving will be taken into consideration too, of course.



Waterlogging on Tom Bolger's reseed near Borris in Carlow.



"Weanlings are doing as much damage as the cows now" - Sean Hayes, Clare.



Louth farmer Martin O'Hare's 2016-born heifers at grass last month. They are currently indoors on 6kg of ration and close to slaughter.

From where I farm

BETTER farmers share their snaps

This week our BETTER beef farmers got their smartphones out to give us a taste of what's happening on farm



Michael McDonald's Aubrac bull is running with 30 maiden heifers in Kilkenny.



Harry Lalor is using tall fence posts to encourage calves to graze ahead of cows and facilitate creep feeding in Laois.



Joe Healy has erected flodlights as a safety measure in his yard in Co Meath.



Kieran Noonan's calves are creeping ahead of cows in North Cork.



"This group came in the day after this picture was taken three weeks ago. Calves are now all weaned. Heavier ones are inside on ration and silage/straw. Lighter ones are on an outfarm eating reseeds" - James Flaherty, Kerry



"The one I was looking for" - Ken Gill's (Offaly) last calf of calving 2017 goes to grass.



Given deteriorating ground conditions, all of Nigel O'Kane's cows and calves are housed in Galway. He is weaning using QuietWean nose tags.



Michael McDonald serving a TUT (Charolais) cow with a SI4147 (Simmental) straw in Kilkenny.



Dwayne Stanley's autumn batch of dairy-bred calves have arrived on farm for rearing near Thurles in Tipperary.



Near Gorey in Wexford, Cathal Breen's steers are in for fattening.



Ricky Milligan (Kildare) is in the process of converting a cubicle shed to a loose house for weanlings with separate feed passage.



Near Bailieborough in Cavan, Garreth McCormack's cows and calves have been indoors since last Wednesday.



This picture was taken five days after Garreth McCormack was forced to house stock.