

## Teagasc Johnstown Castle Teagasc/ABP Dairy Beef Research Programme

### Update: 06-04-2018

With 170ml of rainfall and soil temperatures of 4.3°C on average for the month of March, all the cattle are indoors once again in Johnstown Castle as ground conditions prevent grazing, although there is a quantity of grass available to graze.

Although good growing conditions last year meant we had harvested a large quantity of silage, we have run extremely tight, just like many farms across the country. This has been exacerbated by the extra stock we are carrying this year over last year (54 more two year old steers that will be killed off of grass in June/July).

Because of this shortage, the cattle are being fed higher levels of concentrate alongside silage and straw. With better weather forecast for next week, the hope is to get the lighter cattle turned out to grass as soon as conditions allow.

### **Animal Performance:**

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#### ***Older cattle***

- The two year steers have been doing well over the winter period. When the silage situation became a major concern, action had to be taken. Consequently for the last two weeks the steers have been fed ~8 kg concentrates alongside 3 kg straw and 3 kg silage.
- Last year, the two year old steers were turned out on the 7<sup>th</sup> April. It is hoped to have the steers out over the next two weeks on some of the drier paddocks, as this high level of meal feeding is not sustainable for a prolonged period.

#### ***Yearlings***

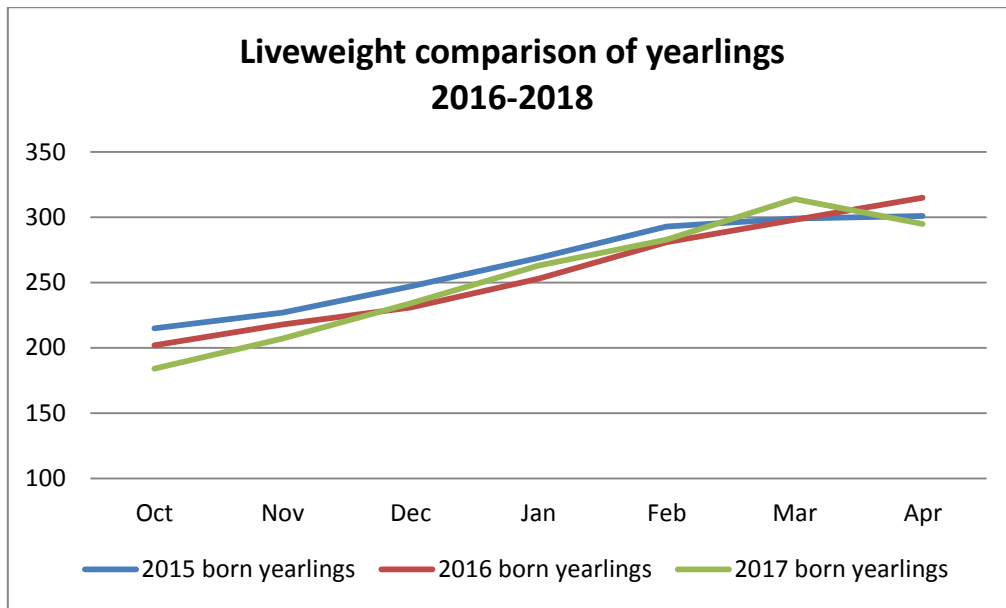
- The 107 animals turned out on 21<sup>st</sup> March were rehoused on 3<sup>rd</sup> April due to the poor ground conditions and grass growth. Although they had been grazing in small groups, it was difficult to minimise the damage they were causing.
- When the cattle were rehoused, they were weighed and averaged 295 kg (weight loss mainly due to gut fill effect).
- Concentrate supplementation to the yearlings had ceased early March, however with fodder becoming scarce and the weather showing no sign of letting up, concentrate supplementation recommenced late March, and yearlings are now being fed 6.5kg concentrate alongside 2 kg straw and 2 kg of silage.
- From the chart below, this year's yearlings were lighter when housed in October 2017 compared to the previous year's weanlings. However they caught up over the winter period.

### **Grass Management:**

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- Grass growth is currently ~10 kg DM/ha/day. Soil temperature has risen to ~7°C which will encourage grass growth.
- Grass cuts taken 24-28th March averaged 15.9% DM.

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*\*The March and April weights for the 2017 born weanlings are only of 107 calves that were turned out, and these were the strongest of the calves.*