

The 60:40 Autumn Grassland Management Plan

Farmer name: _____ Year: _____

Area available for grazing: _____ hectares

Date on which last round starts: _____

Table 1: Area available for grazing each day this autumn

	60%	40%
Date	Date 60% is grazed	Date cows are full-time housed
Number of days	From start to 60% date (a)	From 60% date to housing date (b)
Hectares to be grazed	(c)	(d)
	(0.6 X total area)	(0.4 X total area)
Hectares per day	(c ÷ a)	(d ÷ b)

Table 2: Autumn grazing planner showing weekly targets (from Table 1)

Week Beginning	Grazing area		Actual area grazed per week
	per day	per week	
Total		Ha	Ha

If you want to make best use of grass as a feed for your dairy cows, you need to walk your grazing area on a weekly basis.

Autumn grazing - objectives

- Keep grass in the milking cows' diet for as long as possible this autumn.
- Allocate a portion of the farm for grazing each day.
- Start closing paddocks from the 10th October onwards (1-2 weeks earlier in wet areas).
- Aim to have 60% farm closed by the end of the first week of November (1-2 weeks earlier in wet areas).
- Leave the grazing platform with an "adequate grass cover" when the cows are housed.

Teagasc Message: The key to providing grass for your milking herd next spring is to graze 60% of your grazing platform by end of the first week of November. The paddocks grazed by this date will have an opportunity to grow grass before growth rates decline in November.

Autumn grazing - guidelines

- Graze paddocks to 3.5-4 cm to encourage winter tillering of the grass plant.
- Do not re-graze fields that have been closed.
- Feed supplements if there is insufficient grass in the daily allocation.
- Skip heavier paddocks – and graze paddocks with ideal covers - to meet 60% target if necessary.
- Use wet weather grazing techniques if ground conditions deteriorate.

Teagasc Message: During the last rotation, you must focus on grazing residuals if you want to have top quality swards for your milking herd next spring.

Preparing for autumn grazing

- Rotation length should increase from 25 days in mid-August to 35 days by mid-September and 45 days by the start of the last rotation.
- Grass covers should increase to a peak of 450 kgDM/cow or 1,150 kgDM/Ha in mid- to late-September.
- Do not build up too much grass as heavy covers are difficult to graze under wet conditions and will delay the achievement of the 60% target.
- Assess grass covers in early September. Blanket spread the entire farm with 30 /Ha N before September 15th where possible.

Calculations

- Calculate Stocking Rate: Divide the number of cows by the area available for grazing (hectares).

For example, 60 cows ÷ 24 hectares = 2.5 cows/ha

- Calculate Cover per Cow: Divide average farm cover by stocking rate.

For example, 1,130 kgDM/Ha ÷ 2.5 cows/ha = 450 kgDM/cow

- Calculate Allocation per Cow: Divide grass available on paddock by number of cows.

For example, a 2.5 hectare paddock with a cover of 1,500 kgDM/Ha has a total cover of 2.5 x 1,500 = 3,000 kgDM. If there are 60 cows grazing this paddock, then there is an allocation of 3,000 ÷ 60 = 50 kgDM/cow (three days full-time grazing at this time of the year).

On/ Off Grazing

- If cows remain in a paddock during periods of high rainfall, treading or poaching damage will occur.
- Research has shown that on/ off grazing can result in 'normal' cow intakes and performance while minimising the risk of poaching damage.