Curtins Farm Walk Notes Monday 18-05-09

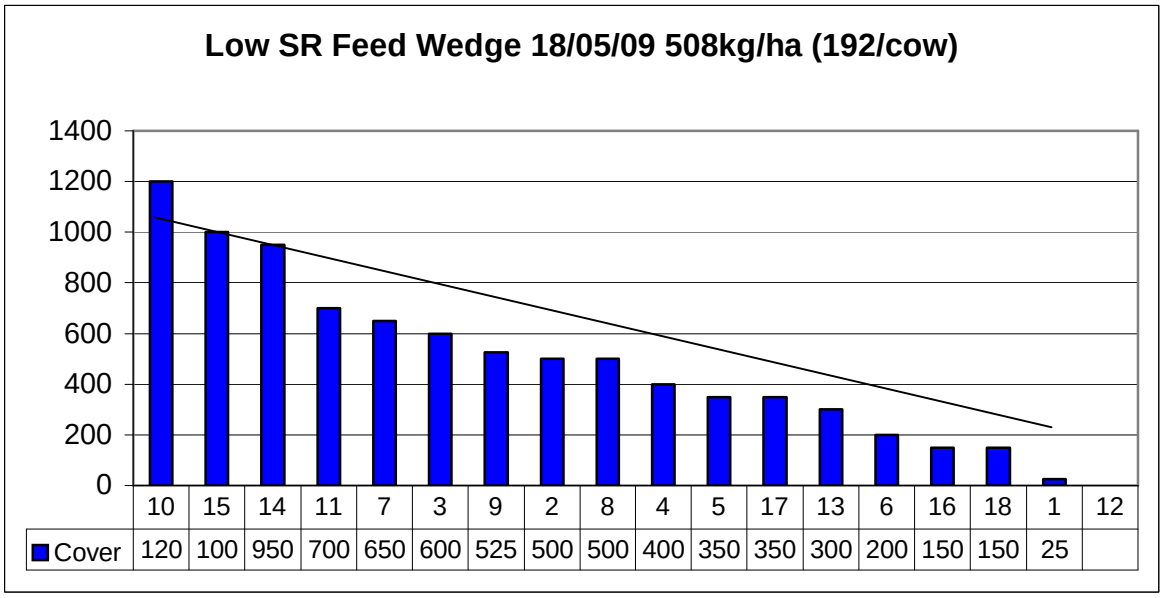
Low Stocking Rate Group (2.5 HF Cows/ha)

Critical Issues

1) **Maintain post-grazing height at between 4.5 - 5cm**
2) **Identify any surpluses and maintain pre-grazing yield at 1010kg**

Situation

Figure 1. Farm Feed Wedge 18/05/09



1) As can be seen from Figure 1. almost every block is below the target line. This is a concern as growth is poor and weather for this week is not expected to improve so the outlook for increased growth is bleak over the coming days.
2) In order to maintain the rotation length at 18 days, we have included 4kg of concentrate into the diet.
3) The ideal pre-grazing yield for this group is 810kg if their allowance is 17kg/day and rotation length is 18 days. Stocking rate is 2.65 cows/ha. However, because we are leaving a post grazing residual of approximately 200kg our ideal pre-grazing yield for this group is 1010kg.

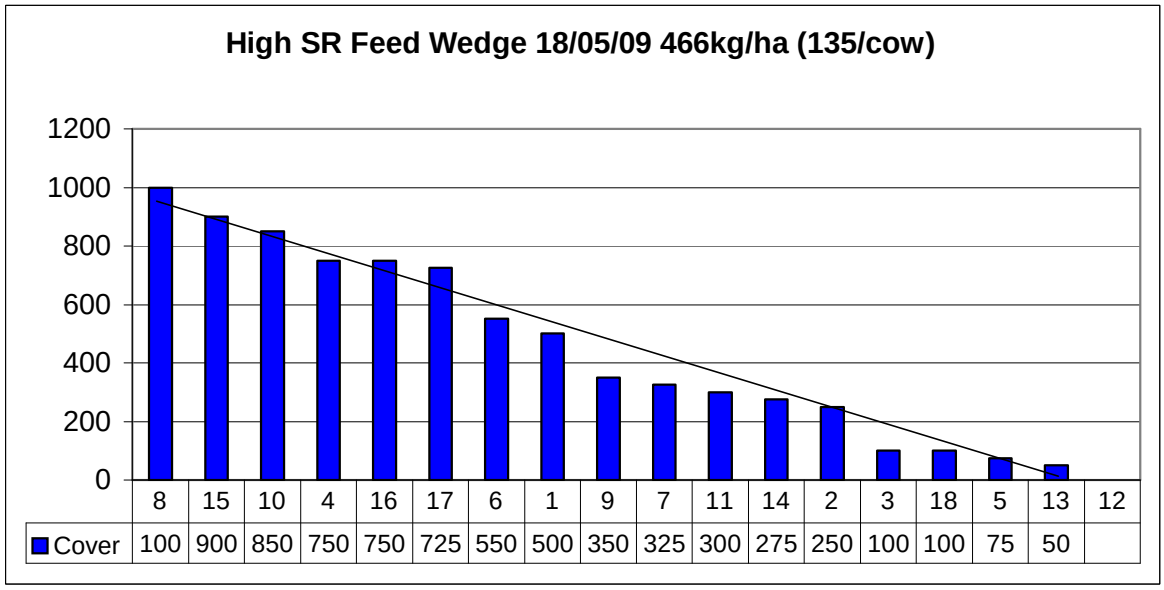
High Stocking Rate Group (3.3 HF Cows/ha)

Critical Issues

3) **Maintain post-grazing height at between 3 and 3.5cm**
4) **Maintain pre-grazing yield at 950kg**

Situation

Figure 2. Farm Feed Wedge 18/05/09



1. As can be seen from figure 2, we have a perfectly shaped wedge. We have no surpluses so no paddocks have been selected for silage this week.
2. Last week, our ideal pre-grazing yield for this group was 1000kg. By Wednesday of last week it was obvious that we were not achieving this pre-grazing yield and that the rotation length was speeding up (15/16 days). We decided to graze block 3, which was previously closed for silage.
3. While the pre-grazing yield on this block was very high (>2,500kg/ha) it was successful in slowing down the rotation. This allowed Block 8 to reach target level by Monday. 4kg of concentrate were also fed.

Whole Farm Situation

1. Average soil temperature for the past week was 11.2ºC, last week 10.3ºC.
2. Total rainfall for the week was 45mm.
3. Average weekly growth this week was 47kg/day, average for the previous 3 years was 57kg/day. The poor growth is as a result of low soil and air temperatures and heavy rainfall. There is no improvement in the forecast so growth rates will probably remain the same for this week.
4. Dry matter was 15% on Monday.
5. 20 units urea/acre is being spread after grazing.

6. Breeding season commenced on Monday 20th April.
7. Latest milk quality rest results from the milk processor are; Fat 3.90%, Protein 3.42%, Lactose 4.78%, SCC 225k, TBC 10k, Thermoduric N/D, Sediment A.
8. Critical Short-term Actions:
    a. Cows are on 12-hour allocations, grazing square blocks. On/Off grazing will be used if necessary in order to prevent poaching.
    b. Cut silage before the base begins to turn white. This reduces the lag period between cutting and growing, thereby increasing growth and allowing aftergrass back into the grazing rotation faster. We can achieve this after 5/6 weeks of growth.
    c. Achieve a high submission rate now to ensure compact calving next February, regular monitoring of cows and using tail paint will help us to achieve this.

EXPERIMENTAL PROGRESS REPORT AS AT SUNDAY, 17/05/09

Objective: To compare the biological efficiency of alternative calving date and stocking rate combinations for Irish spring calving pasture-based production systems

Herd Details	EBI (€)	MILK SI (€)	FERT SI (€)	CALVING SI (€)	HEALTH (€)
Average	**112**	**59**	**45**	**20**	**-3**

(November 2008 ICBF)

Calving Date Group	Early Calving			Late Calving		
Stocking rate Group	**Low**	**Medium**	**High**	**Low**	**Medium**	**High**
Stocking rate (cows/ha)	2.51	2.92	3.28	2.51	2.92	3.28
Mean calving date	9/2	12/2	11/2	19/2	24/2	21/2
Ear-tag Colour	White	Blue	Orange	White	Blue	Orange
Band Colour	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Blue	Blue	Blue
Week Details:						
Area allocated (m^2/day)	2400	2000	1800	2400	2000	1800
Farmlet cover (kg DM/cow)	192	202	135	213	198	137
Pre-herbage mass (kg DM/ha)	1000	900	900	1000	900	900
Residual grazing height (cm)	4.52	4.35	3.08	4.27	4.35	3.42
Diet (kg DM/cow/day)						
Grass	17	16	15	17	16	15
Silage	0	0	0	0	0	0
Concentrate	0	0	0	0	0	0
Milk solids (kg/cow/day)	1.6	1.54	1.50	1.66	1.60	1.65
Milk yield (kg/cow/day)	22.0	21.1	20.0	23.0	22.9	22.1
% Fat	3.89	3.95	4.13	3.82	3.79	4.05
% Protein	3.42	3.34	3.39	3.42	3.22	3.14
Bodyweight (kg)	496	496	477	504	512	491
Condition Score	2.92	2.84	2.74	2.96	2.88	2.90
Cumulative:						
Milk solids (kg/cow)	173	161	156	145	135	139
(kg/ha)	436	470	512	365	394	456
Milk yield (kg/cow)	2263	2091	2026	1925	1801	1804
% Fat	4.28	4.39	4.32	4.13	4.18	4.39
% Protein	3.40	3.33	3.39	3.45	3.37	3.40
Days in milk	97	96	97	84	82	82
Total supplement fed (kg/cow)						
Concentrate	180	186	182	129	132	134
Silage	63	111	119	20	37	43
Conserved silage (kg DM /cow)	223	100	100	223	100	100
Farmlet area (hectares)	9.17	7.87	7.01	9.17	7.87	7.01
Number of cows calved	23	23	23	23	23	23
Number of cows in group	23	23	23	23	23	23

NB: These are raw data that have not been statistically analysed and, therefore, no definite conclusions can be drawn from them.