

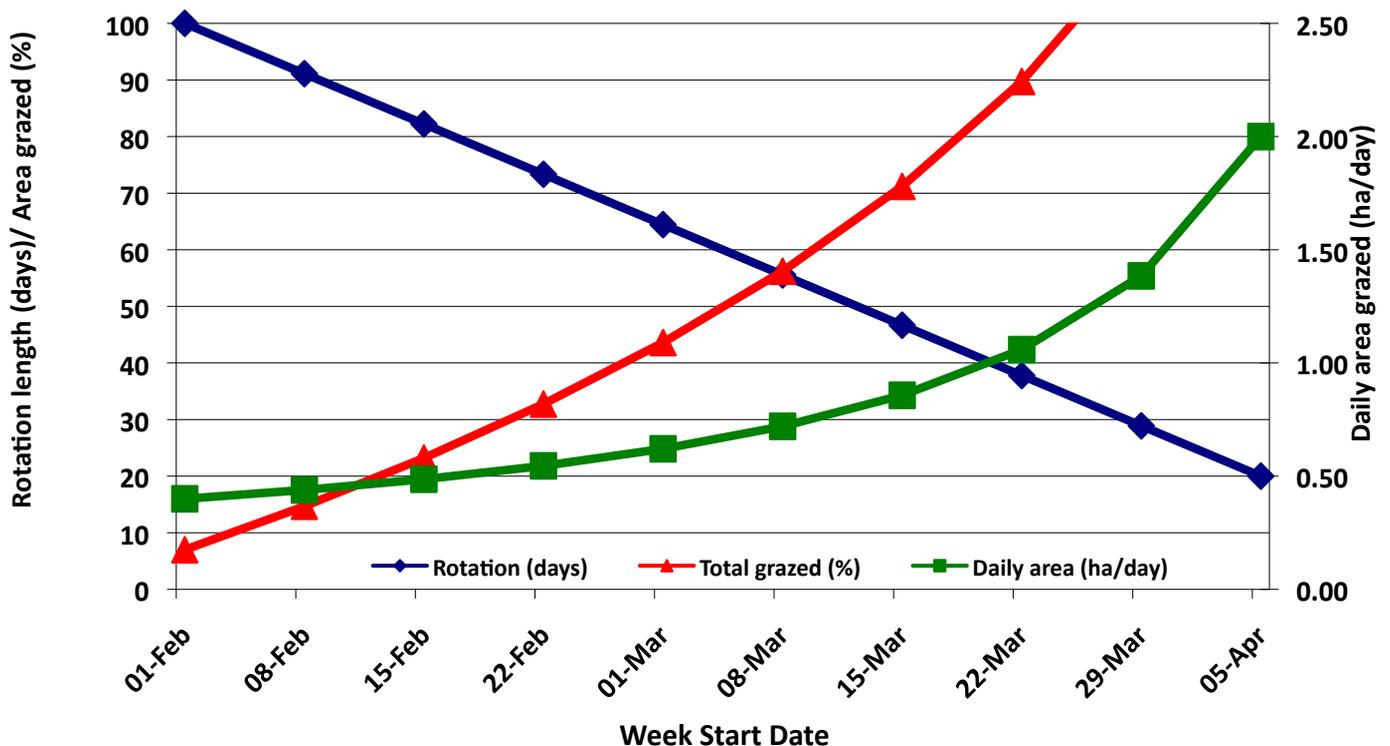
Allocating Spring Grass using the Spring Rotation Planner

The most efficient way to allocate spring grass is according to the Spring Rotation Planner (SRP). The SRP allocates an appropriate proportion of the farm each day from February 1st to early April. Together with weekly measurement of Average Farm Cover (AFC), using the SRP to allocate grass will ensure that there is sufficient grass until the end of the 1st rotation. Figure 1 below illustrates a typical SRP for a dairy farm to follow during spring 2015.

Creating an SRP for your farm

- The plan will vary from farm to farm, depending on when turnout can occur and when 'magic day' (date when grass growth equals demand) is reached. A SRP can be created by following the link to the spring rotation plan from the Moorepark webpage (<http://www.agresearch.teagasc.ie/moorepark/>). To create the plan for a farm, you must enter the farm area (ha), planned turnout date and magic date for your farm.
- A sample plan for a 40 hectare farm is shown in Figure 1, commencing at turnout on February 1st. Initially, rotation length is set at 100 days (1/100th of the farm grazed per day) and declines to a rotation length of 20 days on April 10th (1/20th of the farm grazed per day).

Figure 1: Sample Spring Rotation Plan for a 40 hectare dairy farm.



The main points of the plan are:

- to get freshly calved cows out grazing as soon as possible post-calving. Feed allowance increases steadily from calving until the breeding season
- to graze 30% of the farm area during February to stimulate regrowth for rotation 2, which will commence between April 1st and 10th depending on grass growth rates.
- to have 60% of the farm area grazed by March 17th, and to stretch the remaining 40% until early April (and later if growth rates are below normal).
- The main targets for each week of the plan are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Target rotation length (days), daily area allocated (ha) and proportion of total farm area grazed (%) for each week of spring.

Week	Rotation (days)	Daily area (ha/day)	Total area grazed by week end (%)
1st to 7th Feb	100	0.4	7
8th to 14th Feb	91	0.44	15
15th to 21st Feb	82	0.49	23
22nd to 28th Feb	73	0.55	33
1st to 7th Mar	64	0.62	44
8th to 14th Mar	56	0.72	56
15th to 21st Mar	47	0.86	71
22nd to 28th Mar	38	1.06	90
29th Mar to 4th Apr	29	1.38	114

For the plan to be successful, the following is required:

- **Stick to the planned area per day.** Skipping ahead of the area plan will result in a short first rotation, not enough grass to get to magic day and may also compromise subsequent regrowth rates.
- **Manage supplementation according to post-grazing residuals.** Post-grazing residual height should be maintained at 3.5 cm during the 1st rotation. If post-grazing height exceeds 3.5 cm based on the daily area allocation, demand per day must be increased by reducing/eliminating supplementation. If post-grazing residual height falls below 3.0 cm, supplementation must be increased.
- **Use a strip wire to allocate grass on a 12-hour basis.**
- **The area already grazed should be back fenced in wet weather to avoid pasture damage.**
- **On/Off grazing is essential in wet weather.** On/off grazing with 3 hours of grass access after each milking followed by rehousing is an excellent way to allocate grass and protect swards during inclement weather conditions. Once sufficient grass is available, cows do not need to be supplemented with grass silage when indoors.