

To Run a Discussion Group Meeting on Grass

Standard Operating Procedure

- The advisor makes contact with a suitable farmer to host the meeting. A date and time should be arranged to suit the host farmer, group members and facilitator. The facilitator should make sure that the host farmer has a map of the grazing platform of the farm ready for the farm visit prior to the meeting.
- Once a host farmer, date and time is established for the meeting, an invitation should be sent out to the group members. This should include time, date and purpose of the meeting.
- The facilitator should make contact with all farmers to make sure that they have carried out a grass measurement and filled in an input sheet for the meeting (phone-call, WhatsApp message etc.)
- The facilitator should visit the host farmer 1- 2 days prior to the meeting to carry out a grass measurement and to see the decisions being made at farm level. The facilitator should look at the PastureBase wedge/criteria, pre-grazing yields, residuals, fertiliser programme, paddock layout etc. The facilitator should study the map of the grazing platform and bring it back to the office.
- A handout should be made with the map of the farm, background, current performance of the farm, PastureBase report for the host farmer, PastureBase group report containing all group members & Grass10 newsletter.
- Check the dry matter on www.pbi.ie prior to meeting (twitter feed or research farms)
- The facilitator should meet the farmers, go down and look at the livestock to see current grazing practice. Grazing infrastructure and grass quality should be discussed.
- The facilitator should then take the farmers to the paddock where livestock will go next. A cut and weigh grass measurement should be carried out to determine the pre-grazing yield. Discussion of the pre grazing yield should take place.
- The group should then attend the paddock that was last grazed on the farm. The post grazing height should be measured with a platemeter to determine the residual and grazing severity. Discussion should take place (target 4cm during main grazing season).
- Topics of discussion at every meeting should be:
 - Average farm cover, cover/LU, days ahead
 - Growth vs Demand (supplement, stocking rate)
 - Pre grazing yields (this should be cut and weighed with a quadrant and shears: e.g. $0.175\text{kg} \times 20\%\text{DM} \times 40,000 = 1400 \text{ kgDM/ha}$ target during main grazing season)
 - Residuals (implications of undergrazing and over grazing) (target 4cm)
 - Production levels (kgMS/cow, performance of calves/lambs etc.)
 - Spring rotation plan/ autumn rotation plan (shoulders of the year)
 - Grazing Infrastructure, soil fertility/ N application, reseeding
 - Any other business
- After studying the host farmers PBI performance, pre-grazing yield & residuals, a conclusion should be reached and recommendations should be made to the farmer from the group members E.g. reduce meal levels, cut bales etc. A flip chart is useful for this discussion
- After analysing the group report and the group members average farm cover, cover/Lu etc. a recommendation should be established for the group e.g. Our average cover/LU is

200kgDM/LU on July 1st. We should be targeting 160-180kgDM/LU. We should cut surplus bales to maintain grass quality and maximise utilisation.