**Benefits of SPRING GRAZING**

- Lower feed costs
- Higher daily gain
- Fewer days to finish/slaughter
- Lower direct costs (labour/feed/machinery)

Grazed grass is the highest quality feed on the farm in spring, better than silage and equivalent to concentrates.

**Turnout during the main grazing season**

**DOs**

- Maximise early spring grazing in the diet of freshly calved suckler cows or priority cattle
- Graze paddocks to 3.5cm to 4cm in the first rotation
- Implement off/finish grazing or remove stock from grass to prevent damage

**DON’Ts**

- Allow stock remain on paddocks during heavy rainfall resulting in poaching
- Use silage supply as a target for turnout date
- Turn out all animals in the herd at once

Grazed spring grass is the highest quality feed on the farm in spring, better than silage and equivalent to concentrates. Grass is our secret weapon against rising cereal prices. Grazing spring grass is the highest quality feed on the farm in spring, better than silage and equivalent to concentrates.

**Spring Grazing Guidelines** is the first in the three-part series and will be followed up with a Summer Grazing Management supplement in early May. The series will conclude in mid-August with a supplement entitled Management of Autumn Pasture and Preparing for Spring. The supplements aim to provide you with a simple guide to the principles of grassland management and help you maximise grass growth.

The information for this supplement was compiled by Teagasc beef specialists and grassland researchers and the Irish Farmers’ Journal livestock team.
### JANUARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mon 10</th>
<th>Tues 11</th>
<th>Wed 12</th>
<th>Thurs 13</th>
<th>Fri 14</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **Mon 17**: Slurry spreading on dry farm
- **Tues 18**: Slurry spreading on dry farm
- **Wed 19**: Slurry spreading on dry farm
- **Thurs 20**: Slurry spreading on dry farm
- **Fri 21**: Slurry spreading on dry farm

**TOP TIPS FOR THE MONTH**

- **Slurry**: Spread slurry on light covers that were closed up last in the autumn. Apply 2500 gallons per acre equivalent to spreading 0.5 bags of urea per acre. Remember to check the dates for your spreading zone.

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### FEBRUARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wed 2</th>
<th>Thurs 3</th>
<th>Fri 4</th>
<th>Sat 5</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **Mon 7**: Spread N on dry farm
- **Tues 8**: Spread N on dry farm
- **Wed 9**: Spread N on dry farm
- **Thurs 10**: Spread N on dry farm
- **Fri 11**: Get stock out to grass
- **Sat 12**: Get stock out to grass

**TOP TIPS FOR THE MONTH**

- **Early Nitrogen**: Nitrogen should be applied on dry farms in early February with heavier farms getting out in mid-late February. Spread at a rate of 23 units 0.5 bags of urea per acre. Soil temperature should be consistently above 5-6 degrees C. Do not spread if heavy rain is forecast.

---

### MARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wed 23</th>
<th>Thurs 24</th>
<th>Fri 25</th>
<th>Sat 26</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **Mon 14**: Get stock out to grass
- **Tues 15**: 40% of dry farm grazed off
- **Wed 16**: Get stock out to grass on heavy farm
- **Thurs 17**: Get stock out to grass on heavy farm
- **Fri 18**: Get stock out to grass on heavy farm
- **Sat 19**: Get stock out to grass

**TOP TIPS FOR THE MONTH**

- **Grazing**: Try to graze paddocks down as tight as ground conditions allow. Target to get down to 3.5-4cm before moving stock on. Do not damage swards. When ground conditions are poor, move stock on quicker. Shift stock onto a hardcore area or rough grazing area during periods of torrential rain.

---

### APRIL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thu 31</th>
<th>Fri 1</th>
<th>Sat 2</th>
<th>Sun 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Mon 18**: Closed for silage on heavy farm
- **Tues 19**: Slurry spreading on dry farm
- **Wed 20**: Silage
- **Thurs 21**: Close for silage on heavy farm
- **Fri 22**: Closed for silage on dry farm

**TOP TIPS FOR THE MONTH**

- **Grazing**: On dry farms where stock went out to grass in mid-February the first rotation should be completed around 10 April. The first rotation on dry farms should be 60 days falling back to 40-50 days on heavier farms that are going out to grass later.

**Silage**: Silage ground should be closed up on dry farms around the 30th of April with heavier farms closing up around the 20th. Remember to take into account carryover N, P & K when calculating fertiliser requirement for silage ground.
Getting the turnout date right

Groups of animals should be prioritised for early turnout, i.e. those that will benefit most from high quality spring grass e.g. young bulls, two-year-old steers or beef heifers.

### What are the advantages of finishing the first rotation on time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADVANTAGES</th>
<th>DISADVANTAGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have 6-7cm of grass (1,200+kg DM/ha) on first grazed paddock</td>
<td>Too much grass on farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the recommended 10 to 14 days grass on the farm</td>
<td>Have 21-28 days grass on farm (double the requirement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High grass quality for second rotation due to high grass utilisation in first rotation</td>
<td>Poor grass utilised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a ‘wedge’: most grass will be in the paddock grazed first in spring, least in the paddock grazed last</td>
<td>Post-grazing height too high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can close 30-40% of farm for silage</td>
<td>Will have to close &gt;50% of farm to correct grass surplus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little topping required</td>
<td>One to two rounds of topping required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher weight gains</td>
<td>Poor weight gain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Turnout during the main grazing season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TURNOUT IS TOO LATE</th>
<th>TURNOUT IS RIGHT</th>
<th>TURNOUT IS TOO EARLY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too much grass</td>
<td>Cheaper feed costs</td>
<td>Run out of grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor grass utilisation</td>
<td>Long first rotation</td>
<td>Very short first rotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor grass growth</td>
<td>Utilise all early grass</td>
<td>Reduced grass growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short first rotation</td>
<td>Can close only what’s required for silage</td>
<td>No grass before early May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much area for first cut silage</td>
<td>Priority stock to grass</td>
<td>No rest period for paddocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High stocking rate on grazing area</td>
<td>Silage cut will be late or unable to make sufficient quantities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slurry may not be spread</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too cautious</td>
<td>Continuous measurement</td>
<td>No measurement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Turnout during the main grazing season

**DOs**

- Prioritise groups of cattle to be turned out
- Finish first-round grazing by 10-20 April
- Graze 30-40% of the grazing paddocks first to allow for re-growth
- Graze silage area after 30-40% of grazing ground has been grazed
- Turn stock out during dry periods to let cattle settle
- Graze 40% of the farm by the March 17 and the rest by April 10. Both of these dates can be extended by 10 days on heavier farms

**DON'Ts**

- Turn out all cattle together
- Graze paddocks for longer than 4 days
- Leave a post-grazing residual of more than 4cm
- Turn stock out if pre-grazing yield is below 100kg DM/Ha (3-4cm)
- Turn cattle out late as it will lead to grass accumulations during the main growing season

---

The aim in spring is to increase the proportion of grass in the diet of the grazing animal but to budget your grass so that there is enough grass until the start of the second grazing rotation in early to mid-April.

Spring grazing should start in February/March and continue until mid-April. This varies from farm to farm but the overriding aspect of grazing management is to make good use of spring grass.

**PRIORITY STOCK**

All animals in the herd do not have to be turned out together or at the same time. Groups of animals should be prioritised for early turnout, i.e. those that will benefit most from high quality spring grass e.g. young bulls, two-year-old steers or beef heifers.

**FIRST ROTATION**

First grazing rotation should be 40 to 50 days and finish around 10 April. This can be extended to 20 April in later growing or poorer grass growing areas.

**AREA TO GRAZE FIRST**

Grazing 30% to 40% of the grazing paddocks first to allow re-growths to accumulate for the start of the second rotation.

Silage ground should be grazed early in the first rotation — this will increase the available grazing area.

**STRIP GRAZING**

If strip grazing or block grazing, a maximum of three to four days per block should be practised during the first grazing rotation to protect re-growth and ensure grass supply for the second rotation.

**POST-GRAZING**

Post-grazing heights of 3.5cm to 4cm should be targeted during the first grazing rotation. Late turnout with high farm grass covers will often lead to poor grass utilisation and subsequent poor pasture quality.

Turnout of animals should take place during periods of dry weather, with good underfoot conditions — this will give animals an opportunity to ’settle’ and start grazing properly.

Early turnout will reduce the accumulation of surpluses during the main grazing season.
**Farmer Experiences**

**DERMOT O’CONNOR**
*Teagasc/Farmers Journal Better Farm Programme*
Rathnapree, Hacketstown, Co. Carlow

At the beginning of the BET-FARM farm programme I was provided with a plate meter and set the weekly task of measuring grass on my farm. The purpose of this was that I could do a weekly grass budget for my farm and in turn improve grassland management, achieve earlier turnout dates and maintain grass quality throughout the grazing season.

I manage each of the three farms as a separate unit for grass budgeting so I have a better handle on what exactly is happening on each farm. At the beginning of the programme I was a little sceptical of spending two and half hours each week walking my farm to measure grass. I now see it as one of the most important jobs to be done each week.

Inputting the data on the Teagasc Grassland programme allows me to take corrective action 10-14 days in advance.

There is no point in taking action when it’s too late. You need to see the problems coming.

Going forward I am aiming for a 270-day grazing season. I aim to have the first light weanlings out on 15th February and finish the last rotation on 15th November. In order for this to happen I need to start closing up paddocks for early grazing from 1 October. The plan for spring grazing is to graze the first half of paddocks until mid March, then move to graze silage ground until approximately 1 April and then finish paddocks. Now I pay close attention to grass that the cattle are going in to graze and I would aim to be grazing grass when it hits about 8cm.

Past experience has shown me that once it hits 10 cm and over this is too strong and stem material starts to accumulate.

By not allowing cattle enter these strong covers this summer I have managed to conserve an additional 18 acres into the pit. The available grass supply should be budgeted, by using the spring rotation programme I was able to take corrective action 10-14 days in advance.

It takes a step up in fertiliser use but also by altering stocking rate to take account of increasing or decreasing growth rates. At peak growth throughout the summer we would carry up to 2800kg LW/ha. Measuring grass in my opinion is a key element of becoming a good grassland manager. It gives you the confidence to make a decision and that you won’t regret it afterwards.

We aim to go into covers that are 1200-1300kg DM/ha. We don’t like to let grass covers get too high. If we keep the covers short we can clean them out well and keep quality. It is these covers that really push animal performance.

We find that heavy covers take too long to clean out. Ideally you should be in and out of a paddock in 3-4 days. It does put you under more pressure when you are moving stock faster, but the grass quality is much better. When you can clean out paddocks it eliminates the need to do a lot of topping.

**Advanced tips on turnout**

Silage ground should be grazed early in the first rotation – this will increase the available grazing area and still ensure a high yielding silage crop.

Aim for a target farm cover of 700 – 800 kg DM/ha at turnout. Turnout at lower and higher covers is possible at lower and higher stocking rates, respectively.

If possible pre-grazing yields should not be less than 1000kg DM/ha and not greater than 1400 kg DM/ha at turnout (7cm to 9 cm).

Aim to graze 40% of the farm by March 17th and the remaining 60% by April 10th, this will create a ‘wedge’ of grass and simplify grazing in the second rotation.

The available grass supply should be budgeted, by using the spring rotation planner this will ensure that there is sufficient grazing area available until the end of the first grazing rotation.

A target farm grass cover of 550–600 kg DM/ha by May 1st (at a stocking rate of 2500 kg LW/ha on the grazing area).
To ensure efficient grass-based beef production, a rotational grazing system is essential. A rotational grazing system should have a minimum of six and, ideally, eight grazing divisions or paddocks per grazing group on the farm.

**WHY USE A SYSTEM?**
Paddock grazing works on the basic principle of ‘graze and rest’. Therefore, once a paddock is grazed, it is allowed to undergo a rest period to rejuvenate the sward leaf for the following rotation. Grazing swards with fast rotations, (e.g. 12 to 15 days) will decrease grass production on the farm and place the farm at a greater risk of running into grass deficits.

A rotational paddock system can reduce the risk of parasites, especially when calves are part of the production system.

**SETTING UP**
- Get a farm map with exact areas of each paddock.
- Number every paddock.
- Assign specific paddocks to stock, i.e. cow paddocks, fattening stock paddocks, leader/follower paddocks.
- Keep a record of dates when grazed, fertilised, topped and cut for round bale silage.
- Find out the reseeding history, soil fertility of each paddock.
- Maintaining a small number of grazing groups will allow the total number of paddocks required to be maintained at a manageable level. This can be done by grazing steers and bulls together and by mixed grazing of cattle and sheep and leader/follower systems. Roadways are an advantage as they allow access to paddocks and avoid soil damage.

**PADDOCK SIZES**
- Aim for equal divisions, avoiding long, narrow divisions. The ratio of field sides should be no more than 4:1.
- The ideal size for a 40-cow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVES OF PADDOCK SYSTEM</th>
<th>NEGATIVES (WHEN PADDOCK SYSTEMS ARE NOT USED)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grazing management control</td>
<td>Lack of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher grass production</td>
<td>Lower grass production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure high utilisation</td>
<td>Poor utilisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve grass quality</td>
<td>Lower grass quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater access particularly in wet weather</td>
<td>Poor access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow to strip or block graze</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Control of grass budgeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Farm roadways**
Roadways are an obvious advantage as they allow easy access to paddocks and avoid soil damage.

**Water supply**
Keeping water troughs in the centre of the paddock allows for them to be further split with temporary fencing.

**Temporary fencing**
Temporary electric fencing should be used to divide larger fields to give the required paddock size, especially when grazing silage fields during the first rotation.
Example 1

- The map shows a section of a farm—there are two groups of stock (e.g. young steers and beef heifers) grazing the area shown. Each group has eight grazing divisions.
- The young steers graze the eight paddocks light-shaded and the beef heifers graze the eight dark-shaded paddocks.
- The red lines show the road network throughout the farm.

Example 2

- Diagram A shows two water troughs (in blue) placed across the fence and serving two paddocks.
- The heavy dark lines show where strip wires might be placed and how the water troughs serve two divisions.
- Diagram B shows a paddock that is block grazed. One trough is placed in the middle and services each of the four grazing divisions.

suckler herd is 2ha/paddock.
- Ensure that each paddock has a number of access points.
- Water trough access is equally important.
- Temporary electric fencing should be used to divide larger fields to give the required paddock size, especially when grazing silage fields during the first rotation.
- Divide paddocks so that at least four or five grazings can be achieved in spring and two or three in autumn.

WATER
- A water supply in each grazing division is necessary. Ideally, every paddock should have a permanent water supply.
- Placing troughs across fences reduces the number required.
- If using a temporary wire to strip or block graze, strategically place troughs in the field so that animals do not have to walk back over the grazed area for water (see Example 2).
- Keeping water troughs in the centre of the paddock allows for them to be further split with temporary fencing.
- Alternatively, water troughs can be fitted with a long length of water piping and the water trough can be moved between grazing areas within the one paddock.
- Water supply/pressure will often dictate the size and type of water trough used.
Applying slurry in spring

Cattle slurry, as a valuable source of N, P and K, should be applied on the fields that need it most and at the time of year that will give you the best response.

All of the P and K in slurry is available to be utilised and fields that are low in both of these nutrients need to be targeted to receive slurry. On a lot of farms, this will be the silage fields as this is where the feed that eventually produced the slurry came from in the first place.

The time of year that slurry is spread does not affect the availability or utilisation of P and K. This is not the case with N.

N IN CATTLE SLURRY
Half of the nitrogen that is in cattle slurry is in an organic form and the other half as ammonium, the very same as the form of nitrogen that is in purchased urea fertilizer. It is the ammonium half that can replace bought in bagged N. Similar to urea fertilizer there are times of the year during which you can expect to get the maximum value of N from slurry and this is very weather dependent.

Ideal conditions for getting the best nitrogen utilisation from cattle slurry are:
- Overcast with very little sunshine
- Slight drizzle of rain
- Little or no wind

Where the weather conditions are only average, there is a 50% loss in utilisation rate and where the conditions are poor, i.e. a dry, sunny day with a strong breeze/wind, there is a further 50% loss in utilisation rate.

A good rule of thumb is that a day that is very good for drying clothes on a washing line is a bad day for spreading slurry, as this is where the feed that eventually produced the slurry came from in the first place.

The time of year that slurry is spread does not affect the availability or utilisation of P and K. This is not the case with N.

RECOMMENDATIONS
In order to get the maximum value out of the N that is in cattle slurry, the majority of it should be spread in the spring when the weather conditions favour it most.

- When weather conditions are suitable, apply 2,500 to 3,000 gallons of slurry to the paddocks/fields that you will be grazing first at least six weeks before turnout.
- Paddocks that have heavy covers of grass should not get slurry until immediately after they are grazed.
- When fields are grazed and closed for silage, apply between 2,000 and 3,000 gallons of cattle slurry before applying any bagged N. Reduce the amount of bagged N spread by taking into account the units that have been supplied in this slurry.

TRAILING SHOE

There are three main advantages with using a trailing shoe slurry spreader in the spring compared with using a splash-plate spreader:
- They widen the window of opportunity in getting slurry out on farms with heavier soils.
- They allow you to spread slurry on paddocks/fields with heavier covers of grass and still be able to graze them six weeks later, i.e. less contamination of grass.
- They increase the utilisation rate of the N that is available in slurry by up to 40%.

While there are advantages to using a trailing shoe spreader in comparison with more conventional spreaders, at their current cost they are still only justifiable in most cases on a contractor scale. Individual farmers should negotiate the best rate possible (per 1,000 gallons spread).

A trailing shoe allows slurry to be spread in a wider window, increases N utilisation and allows slurry to be spread on heavier covers.

Figures 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2,500 gallons cattle slurry per acre (spring application)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 units N per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 units N per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 units N per acre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **IDEAL CONDITIONS**
  - 50% Utilisation Rate (maximum)

- **AVERAGE CONDITIONS**
  - 50% Loss in Utilisation

- **POOR CONDITIONS**
  - Further 50% Loss in Utilisation

**Ideal conditions for spreading slurry**
- Overcast with very little sunshine
- Slight drizzle of rain
- No wind

**DOs DON’ts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spreading slurry</th>
<th>DON’ts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spread most of the slurry produced on the farm in the spring rather than the summer</td>
<td>Spread slurry when heavy rain or frost is forecast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply 2,500-3,000gals of slurry to ground that is going to be grazed in six weeks</td>
<td>Apply slurry to heavy covers until grazed first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spread slurry on silage ground to replace nutrients and reduce chemical N requirement</td>
<td>Apply slurry on dry sunny days with strong breeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spread slurry on dull and slightly wet days</td>
<td>Apply slurry on top of bagged fertiliser</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A day that is very good for drying clothes on a washing line is a bad day for spreading slurry if you want to get the maximum amount of N in it utilised.
Nitrogen fertilizer can provide a boost to spring grass growth, allowing for more cattle to be turned out earlier. Soil temperatures though need to be at least 5°C before there is an adequate response to it and the date at which this occurs can differ from year to year.

Some years, 1kg of N has the ability to grow 10kg to 15kg of grass DM during February while, in other years, there can be little or no grass growth response to it due to prolonged cold weather into March. The general recommendation has been to apply nitrogen fertilizer six weeks before your expected turnout date. With farms that are moving towards turning out smaller groups of cattle at intervals and starting with an earlier turnout date, this recommendation no longer applies and a more targeted approach is needed.

- Paddocks or fields that have heavy covers of grass built up on them (10cm+) from the previous autumn and over the winter should be grazed first before applying N.
- Paddocks with little or no grass covers should receive cattle slurry first and N at a later date. These will be the last to be grazed in the first rotation.
- Target your earliest N applications on the paddocks and fields that have the greatest production potential:
  - Predominantly ryegrass swards
  - With 5cm to 8cm of grass
  - That have good fertility (P, K & lime)
- Apply no more than 23 units N per acre for the first application.
- Apply more than 80 units N per acre for first-cut silage on old pasture
- Apply more than 90 units N per acre for first-cut silage on most other swards
- Take the amount of N spread in cattle slurry into account when applying chemical N for silage
- Graze 40% of the farm by the March 17 and the rest by April 10
- Turn cattle out late as it will lead to grass accumulations during the main growing season

N FOR SILAGE
The amount of N that should be spread for first cut silage will depend on a number of factors.

- Where slurry is applied first, the requirement can be reduced by up to 10 units N per acre
- For first-cut silage on old pasture, a maximum of 80 units (from both slurry and N fertilizer)
- New reseeds will give a response up to 100 units per acre
- Most fields should be targeted to receive 90 units in total

Where fields have received N in the weeks coming up to closing for first cut silage, 1/3 of this N can still assumed to be available and this should also be taken off the requirement.
Get your timing right with a spring rotation planner

The spring rotation planner is a tool that divides the area of your farm into weekly portions and takes the guesswork out of planning the first grazing rotation.

The only data you need to use is the date you want to turn out your animals and the date when you think you are growing enough grass to supply all the grass you need (i.e. supply = demand; Magic Day).

The spring rotation planner will not tell you if you are feeding the cattle enough grass — you will have to gauge that by walking through your paddocks or fields and assessing either visually or by measuring if you have enough grass.

The spring rotation planner is a simple and effective tool to ensure that:
- Sufficient grass is grazed early enough to allow time for re-growth for the second rotation.
- Ensure that grass does not run out before the start of the second rotation.
- A wedge-shaped supply of grass is created, ensuring a continuous supply during the second rotation.

The simple rule is:

**Dry farms:**
- Turnout mid-February
- 60% of the farm grazed by 17 March
- 100% of the farm grazed by 10 April

**Heavy farms:**
- Turnout early/mid-March
- 60% of the farm grazed by 31 March
- 100% of the farm grazed by 20 April

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnout during the main grazing season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 February</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 April</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Turnout during the main grazing season**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15 February</th>
<th>22 February</th>
<th>1 March</th>
<th>8 March</th>
<th>15 March</th>
<th>22 March</th>
<th>29 March</th>
<th>5 April</th>
<th>12 April</th>
<th>19 April</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRAY FARM</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEAVY FARM</td>
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**Sprin rotation planner**

**DOS**

- Graze sufficient grass early enough to allow for re-growth for 2nd rotation
- Ensure grass does not run out before the start of the second grazing
- Stick to the allocated areas in the spring rotation planner
- Turn out all animals before 40% of the farm is grazed

**DON'Ts**

- Start grazing a heavier farm too early
- Forget to supplement feed or reduce stocking rate when grass is in short supply
- Turn out all animals before 40% of the farm is grazed
Example of a 20ha farm where turnout date is 22 February and the first rotation ends 10 April

Table 1: Area available for grazing each week during the spring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turnout date</td>
<td>Date 40% of farm is grazed</td>
<td>Date first rotation ends (100% grazed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 22</td>
<td>17 March</td>
<td>10 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of days</td>
<td>Days from grazing start to 40% date</td>
<td>Days from 40% date to start of second rotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hectares to be grazed</td>
<td>0.4 X total area</td>
<td>0.6 X total area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha/wk</td>
<td>(b) (0.4 x 20ha)</td>
<td>(d) (0.6 x 20ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b+a) x 7</td>
<td>(d+c) x 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= 2.33</td>
<td>= 3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK ENDING</th>
<th>GRAZING AREA PER WEEK</th>
<th>GRAZING AREA IN TOTAL</th>
<th>ACTUAL AREA GRAZED WEEK END</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 Feb to 1 March</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 March to 7 March</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 March to 14 March</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 March to 21 March</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 March to 28 March</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 March to 5 April</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 April to 10 April*</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Second rotation is starting in 5 days. Measure farm cover weekly similar to previous weeks. Continue to fill in actual area.

Wet weather management

THE fear of wet weather can stop farmers turning animals out to grass early in spring. February can be a much drier month than March and April. The main criterion for spring grazing is a flexible attitude. Do not be afraid to turn animals out early and bring them back in if soils get too saturated. Any increase in the proportion of grass in the diet will pay dividends.

On/off grazing has been successfully used on beef farms to retain animals at pasture during periods of heavy rainfall. It is also used as a strategy for earlier turnout of animals on heavier soil types. On/off grazing is where the animals are let out to graze continuously and are removed from the paddock when finished grazing. This minimises soil damage but ensures that grass is being well utilised.

**DOs**
- Have a flexible attitude
- Strip grazing can be used in smaller paddocks. One section could be used per day.
- Where possible practice on/off grazing (i.e. leaving the animals out to graze and then taking them off the pasture again)
- Have multiple access points into a paddock
- Place water troughs so that they will service several strips or divisions when a strip wire is used

**DON’ Ts**
- Don’t let animals poach paddocks excessively
- Give animals a full paddock as grass will be soiled, trampled into the ground and not utilised
- Do not graze paddocks with high covers (i.e. those with the most grass in them) as they will be grossly under utilised
- Do not let animals walk long distances to water troughs
- Where possible use a back fence (i.e. put a temporary wire behind animals preventing them from grazing or walking on the grazed area)

Below is a blank copy of the spring rotation planner that can be copied, filled in and used each year

Table 1: Planner to calculate area available for grazing each week during the spring

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