

Managing reseeds post sowing

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Knowledge Transfer

- The best time to control docks and other weeds (including chickweed) is after reseeding (**Table 1**). Using a post-emergence spray (plenty of choices exist) will kill most seedling weeds before they can properly develop their roots. Seek advice on the correct product to use, as product choice will depend on whether clover is present in the new sward or not.
- Early grazing is essential to encourage tillering of the plant. Graze as soon as the plants can withstand the "pull test" (i.e., do not pull out of the ground), typically at a cover of 700-1,000kg DM/ha (about 6-8cm). Frequent grazings will help the sward "fill out" and thicken up. An early nitrogen (N) fertiliser (27 units N/acre) application after reseeding will also encourage tillering.

Table 1: Management of new reseeds.

	Do	Do not
First eight weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spray weeds before grazing • Graze as soon as the plants do not pull out of the ground, approximately 700-1,000kg DM/ha • Apply N (plus phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) as required) • Apply slug pellets (if required) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graze at a high cover (>1,200kg DM/ha) • Harvest for silage
Second grazing onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graze at 1,000-1,400kg DM/ha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow high covers to develop • Graze in really dry or wet conditions

Managing through a drought



We can all remember the summer of 2018 and the additional challenges posed by drought conditions. At the time of writing, soil moisture deficits (SMDs) of over 25mm

exist in parts of the country. The rate of grass growth starts to decline once the SMD reaches 25mm, and is significantly reduced at 50mm SMD. If this situation continues, farmers must aim to match the growth of grass with the demand of the herd to help maintain grass supply on the farm. A proactive approach must be adopted to tackle the consequences of drought conditions on farms. For example, if growth is 42kg DM/ha/day (about 60% of normal) then the herd demand must match this. A herd stocked at 3.5 cows/ha on the milking platform has a feed demand of 60kg DM/ha/day (3.5 x 17kg DM intake/cow = 59.5kg DM/ha herd demand). If grass growth rate is 42kg DM/ha/day then grass intake

should be about 12kg DM/cow/day (3.5 x 12kg DM intake/cow = 42kg DM/ha herd demand). Consequently, 5-6kg of meal/cow/day (or meal with some high-quality silage) is required to fill the feed gap. Dairy farmers must maintain a minimum of a 20-day rotation (preferably 25 days) to keep some level of grass in the diet despite the reduced level of grass growth. This is not calculated by looking back but by the proportion of the farm grazed each day, i.e., grazing 4-5 acres per day on a 100-acre milking platform. Where drought conditions are (or are likely to become) a problem, topping/mowing paddocks should cease. This is wasting feed and enhancing the drying conditions further. Fertiliser N application should continue in a “green drought” until 25 days have passed without rain. Finally, the water intake of animals will double where grass is dry and silage and meal are being fed, so make sure to ensure an adequate supply of water for all animals.

Managing replacement heifer weanlings

- Most replacement heifer calves should be weaned at this time.
- If taking them off concentrate, they should be approximately 140kg (~25% mature bodyweight for Holstein Friesian heifers) and then wean them gradually off meals onto an all-grass diet.
- It is a good idea to keep calves which are below the target weight (**Table 2**) in a lighter group as there is less competition

Table 2: Recommended weights for different breeds and cross breeds at weaning and at six months of age to achieve the target weights for 24-month calving.

	Holstein Friesian	British/NZ Friesian	Jersey X Holstein Friesian
Weaning weight (kg)	100	95	90
Six-month weight (kg)	165	160	150

between animals in such groups and they can be preferentially fed meals and higher-quality grass to improve growth rates.

- If the lighter calves catch up and grow to a similar size to those in the main grazing group (i.e., calves on target weight) they can be removed from the smaller group and returned to the main group. Calves which

are falling behind in this group can be moved to the lighter group.

- Pre-grazing yields should be approximately 1,100-1,300kg DM/ha.
- A good worming protocol is necessary during the first grazing season.
- Calves should be weighed regularly to ensure that they are achieving target weights.

CellCheck Farm Summary Report



Don't think of regular milk recording as a cost that you can cut out of

your production system. Milk recording is in fact a way of making savings on your farm and increasing your profitability. Milk recording is the best tool you have to establish which cows are the most productive in terms of fat, protein and milk yields and are 'paying their way'. Even more importantly, it identifies cows with high somatic cell counts (SCC), indicating subclinical mastitis. These cows are costing you money. The CellCheck Farm Summary Report (Figure 1) provides a clear overview of how your herd is performing in the area of mastitis control and udder health and if your herd is on, above, or below target. The report uses a star-rating system to highlight areas of excellence, or areas of mastitis control that would benefit from investigation and corrective action. Milk recording is also essential for herds that are considering using selective dry cow therapy. Regular milk recording will give you much better

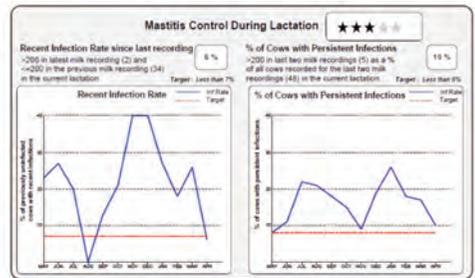


FIGURE 1: Extract from Cellcheck Farm Summary Report. information than ad hoc individual cow testing, and doing it monthly gives you even more bang for your buck.

Top tips:

- measure to manage – measuring an individual cow's performance means you can make informed decisions – this is critical as herds expand; and,
- consider using electronic ID tags now to make milk recording of these animals in the future easier.

Date for your diary

Moorepark Open Day 2019

Irish Dairying: Growing Sustainably – Wednesday July 3 – 8.30am-5.00pm

People management tips

Many dairy farmers have made great progress with both grassland management and animal breeding over the last number of years. But how have you improved your people management skills?

Remember that people are the most important resource on your farm. Martina Gormley, Teagasc Dairy Specialist, compiled these top 10 tips for improving staff attraction and retention from dairy farmers.

1. Be fair, put yourself in their shoes.
2. Vary the tasks.
3. Don't point the finger.
4. Make the tasks easier and more enjoyable.
5. Incentivise with time off, it's not all about money.
6. Explain clearly why you want the task performed in such a way.
7. Let go – give responsibility.
8. Create time so that you can communicate with staff.
9. Have a set start and finish time.
10. Find out what is important to your employees, e.g., finish early on Thursday evening.

Farmer quotes

"It's not about where to find the next employee; it's about keeping the employees you already have."

"Don't let the staff absorb the shocks in the system; better to remove the shocks."

Implementing these tips won't happen overnight; however, it is important to acknowledge what people want and what motivates staff. With a greater demand for labour on dairy farms, you must become better at managing people.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Slurry safety

Following silage harvesting considerable quantities of slurry are spread in June and over the summer months. Slurry handling accounts for 9% of fatal farm accidents due to drowning and gassing. It is crucial to put safety first when handling slurry. Always pick a windy day when agitating slurry. Never enter a



Protect slurry openings when in use.

slurry tank.

Remember, one breath of poison gas, or lack of oxygen, kills. Always guard against falling into a slurry tank by using a physical barrier.

Further information can be found by doing a web search for 'Safe Slurry Handling'.

