

Redstart – Managing a Forage Crop this Autumn
Eddie Webb, B&T Drystock Adviser, Teagasc Galway/Clare

Beef farmers are constantly looking for solutions to remain viable. One such farmer I encountered was Peter Geoghegan of Lissybroiler, Dunmore who sowed a field of Redstart in order to shorten the winter housing period. Redstart is a cross between Kale and Forage Rape. This hybrid Rape/Kale brassica can be mature in 90 days from sowing and be utilised from October onwards as a high energy protein crop for out-wintering cattle or sheep. The Forage Rape genes allow the crop to grow quickly, while the Kale genes deliver excellent winter hardiness.

Peter sowed the crop in July which will generally give the best result in terms of total yield; remembering a days' growth in July, is worth a week in August or a month in September. Expected yield from a well-established crop of Redstart will result in 6-8t DM/ha @ 12-14% DM and 18-20% CP and Energy levels of 10-11MJ/kg DM when sown at the recommended rate of 3 to 3.5kg/acre if drilled or 4.0 kg/acre if broadcast. Redstart has a high requirement for Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium and an adequate supply of these nutrients is critical to maximize the yield potential of the crop. Fertiliser applied by Patrick includes three 50kg bags of 10-10-20 and gran lime to target a pH of 6.5. He also applied 2 bags of CAN per acre post sowing to ensure a good crop.

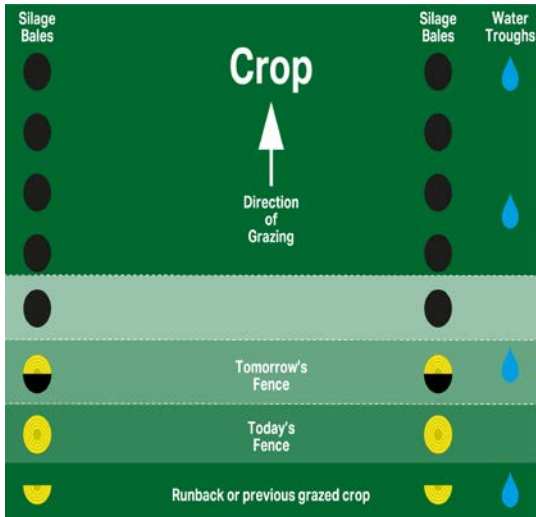
Grazing Management:

The field was divided into two strips approximately 80 meters in length which was influenced by the location of water troughs. The daily feed allocation was calculated by estimating the average bodyweight of the animals and what they require to sustain growth.

		320 kg Weanling
A	Livestock Total Intake (intake at 3% of liveweight)	9.6kg DM/day
B	Redstart % of Diet	70%
C	Redstart Daily Requirement (AxB)	6.72kg
D	Number of Animals	32
E	Daily Requirement of Redstart (CxD)	215 kg DM
F	Estimated Crop Yield 8tDM/ha=0.8kg/m ² @80% Utilisation	0.64 kg DM/m²
G	Total Daily Grazing Area Required (E/F)	336
H	Length of feed face	80metres
I	Fence to be moved (each day)	4 meters

The weanlings will be introduced slowly to the crop and silage will be readily available in order to reduce digestive upsets. The crop will be stripped grazed and the fence moved daily. The fencing needs to be secure as poisoning can occur if animals break through a fence into the main brassica crop and gorge themselves.

Below highlights the grazing plan with tomorrow's fence in place before moving fence in order to prevent the livestock from breaking out to remainder of field.



Redstart is low in minerals like selenium, iodine, copper and cobalt and hence it's essential to give a bolus prior to grazing to ensure adequate minerals are supplied. If you want to stretch out this crop you could increase the fibre allocation if housing is the issue but make sure these crops are finished grazing by mid-February as they will begin to flower. A fresh supply of water and roughage in the form of hay or silage is required during grazing. High liveweight gains have been recorded with Redstart and Peter intends to weigh animals before and after grazing to determine profitability of sowing a crop of Redstart.