

# BEEF

February 2024

## Fertiliser and slurry use

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*Do not spread slurry or fertiliser if rain or very cold weather is on the way.*

Early nitrogen (N) is beneficial for spring growth, but timing is critical. We cannot waste N because of its cost and potential environmental impact. Consider these points before spreading:

- check the weather forecast – do not spread slurry or fertiliser if rain or very cold weather is forecast – watch the farming forecast on a Sunday for detailed information;
- only apply fertiliser N when soil temperature is greater than 5°C and rising – grass is growing at these temperatures and will take up the N;



**DON'T SPREAD  
MORE THAN**

**2,500**

**GALLONS/AC OF  
SLURRY IN ANY  
APPLICATION.**

**Plan your slurry  
use carefully.**

- check soil trafficability before spreading to avoid damage;
- target areas most likely to respond – fields with a high perennial ryegrass content or recently reseeded, drier areas, fields with a grass cover above 6cm, and fields with high phosphorus (P), potassium (K) and lime status;
- using low-emission slurry spreading (LESS) can be a valuable source of N – apply after grazing, on silage areas or areas low in P and K;
- don't spread more than 2,500 gallons/ac in any application – plan your slurry use carefully;



*Check soil trafficability before spreading to avoid damage.*

- if conditions allow and you get a chance to spread chemical N, apply 20-23 units/ac (protected urea preferably); and,
- spread lime if conditions allow.

## Cow-calf bond development

**NOELEEN BRERETON, MARK MCGEE, COLIN BYRNE and BERNADETTE EARLEY** report on the effect of suckler cow breed type and parity on the development of the cow-calf bond post partum and its relationship with calf passive immunity.

Development of the cow-calf bond post partum and passive immunity of calves from spring-calving beef × beef (B×B) and beef × dairy (B×D) cows was determined using primiparous and multiparous (experiment 1), and primiparous and second parity (experiment 2) animals. In experiment 1, calves suckled colostrum (n=126), or were fed using an oesophageal tube (n=26), from their dam within one hour post partum. In experiment 2, calves (n=60) were artificially fed colostrum from their dam. Prior to feeding, colostrum was sampled for immunoglobulin G (IgG) analysis.

### Assessing the bond

Cow-calf bond was assessed using CCTV. Calves were blood sampled at 48 hours post partum to determine IgG and total protein (TP) concentrations, and zinc sulphate turbidity (ZST) units. There was no difference in cow licking and calf standing and suckling between the groups, except in experiment 2; B×D calves had more attempts to suckle before success than B×B. In experiment 1, multiparous cows licked their calves sooner and for longer. Their calves took fewer attempts to stand, stood for

## SCEP reference for 2024

Within the Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme (SCEP) you can alter your yearly reference number. You may want to reduce the 2023 figure by up to 20%.

### Adjusting your number

If you reduced the figure in 2023 you might want to increase it. To make changes, go on to [agfood.ie](http://agfood.ie), click on 'Agschemes – Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme', and change the yearly reference value.

You have until February 19 to do this. Any change to the yearly reference value will impact your total payment for the SCEP. It will alter the requirements around the 50% calving rule, minimum 80% forage area, and your maximum payable area (MPA). It will change the number required for genotyping, calves from eligible sires, and number of teams for weighing. Talk through the implications with your advisor before making any changes.

longer, and had fewer attempts to suckle than primiparous. There was no parity effect on cow-calf behaviour in experiment 2.

### Passive immunity

Colostrum IgG concentrations and measures of calf passive immunity did not differ between the genotypes. In experiment 1, colostrum IgG concentrations were greater in multiparous compared to primiparous cows and their calves had superior passive immunity. Passive immunity did not differ between suckled and artificially fed calves in experiment 1. Cow genotype had little effect on cow-calf behaviours. Primiparous calves were less vigorous than those from

multiparous cows. Colostrum IgG concentration and calf passive

immunity measures were unaffected by genotype, but under natural suckling conditions calves from primiparous cows had lower passive immunity.

## RESEARCH UPDATE



Cow-calf bond was assessed using various methods.

## Slurry safety



February brings an increase in workload and associated risk. Slurry spreading presents two particular safety

problems – drowning and gas poisoning. Drowning is by far the most common cause of slurry death. Only agitate where there is good air movement.

Evacuate all animals and ventilate before you agitate. Open all doors and outlets to provide a draught. Keep people away from the shed and agitation point for at least 40 minutes after starting. Keep the tank opening secure at all times. Beware of gas

in buildings that are linked by tanks or drainage channels.

For a slurry safety video, please scan the QR code.

### Organisation is vital

Take time to organise and manage calving/lambing. Ensure facilities are clean and in good repair.

To help reduce the likelihood of sick animals, take time to manage animal nutrition. Carry out appropriate vaccinations.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

## Upcoming farm walks

There are two DairyBeef 500 walks taking place over the next few weeks:

- James O'Sullivan, Leap, Co. Cork on February 27 at 12.00pm; and,
- Gareth Peoples, Newtowncunningham, Co. Donegal on March 5.

Use protected urea, it's cheaper than CAN or standard urea and delivers 13% higher yield than urea

Get your slurry analysed for nutrient content

Spread slurry close to when grass growth is taking off using LESS equipment

Save good quality slurry for silage ground which has the biggest demand

Continue to spread lime through February to save up to 80 kg N / ha

Grazing animals feed themselves and spread their slurry

**SIGNPOST**  
teagasc