

# BEEF

June 2024

## Fertiliser for the second cut

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*Complete a fodder budget now to assess the situation on your farm.*

Every effort to secure adequate silage reserves is important given that the majority of fodder was used up over this previous winter. Strong growth rates have resulted in surplus paddocks available for harvest, which will help replenish fodder. Complete a fodder budget now to assess the fodder situation on farm. Second-cut silage ground needs to be well fertilised to secure good quality silage with sufficient yields for the coming winter. Silage swards require nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) – the amount of chemical fertiliser allowed will be determined by your nutrient management plan. Cattle slurry can



**SPREAD LIME AT**

# 2t

**per acre on  
mineral soils  
where the soil pH  
is less than 6.3.**

provide sufficient amounts of P and K. Spread slurry on second-cut silage paddocks at 2,000 gallons/acre. Low-emission slurry spreading (LESS) increases the recovery of N by three units per 1,000 gallons compared to splash-plate spreading. The balance required for second-cut silage is N – target 1.2 bags/acre of 38% pro urea with sulphur (S). S is a key nutrient in soil fertility. For second-cut silage, apply 6-12 units of S per acre.



*Sulphur plays a vital role in increasing grass yields.*

## It's time for lime

- Lime increases soil pH and increases the availability of N, P and K for grass growth;
- grass requires a soil pH of 6.3 – spread lime at a rate of 2t/acre on mineral soils where the soil pH is <6.3;
- where silage was cut recently presents a perfect opportunity to get lime spread; and,

- lime increases the availability of applied fertilisers for grass growth and subsequently reduces your fertiliser bill.

Table 1 illustrates best practice when spreading lime alongside fertilisers.

**Table 1: Spreading lime alongside fertilisers.**

First application	Second application	How much time should I leave between the first and second applications?
Lime	Urea	Three months
	Slurry	Three months (only if concerned about the N in slurry)
	Protected urea/ 10-10-20/18-6-12, etc.	One week
Slurry/protected urea/ 10-10-20/18-6-12, etc.	Lime	One week

Silage cannot be harvested from paddocks for two to three months following lime application.

## BEEF2024

The Teagasc BEEF2024 open day will take place on Wednesday, June 26 at the Teagasc Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Grange, Co. Meath. This year's open day will focus on the theme of "Securing your future", highlighting the latest research and

technologies available to farmers to build sustainable cattle businesses. This event takes place every second year and attending is worthwhile for all types of beef farmers across the country. See attached brochure for further details.



## White clover increases liveweight gain

## RESEARCH UPDATE

PETER DOYLE, PETER BENNETT, PAUL CROSSON, MICHAEL O'DONOVAN and MARK MCGEE report on clover research from the Derrypatrick herd.

There is little information on the liveweight gain (LWG) response of beef cattle grazing grass-white clover swards compared to those grazing grass-only swards. In spring 2023, suckler-bred yearling steers and heifers in the Derrypatrick herd were assigned to either a grass-only or a grass-white clover sward for the 'second' grazing season. The experiment aimed to quantify carcass gain on grass-white clover compared to grass-only swards over a grazing season. At the end of the season, animals were slaughtered off grazed pasture.

### Results

Over one grazing season, results indicate that animals grazing grass-white clover swards had a 24kg greater LWG (+0.1kg/day LWG) than those grazing grass-only swards. This equated to a 14kg difference in carcass weight. Therefore, beef farms that incorporate white clover into pastures can reap the rewards of both an LWG benefit and a reduced N fertiliser bill. This directly



*Derrypatrick bullocks grazing grass-white clover swards.*

improves profitability and reduces the farm's carbon footprint, providing a 'win-win' situation.

There were no incidences of bloat on the farm last year; however, it is important to follow the necessary precautions and guidelines to prevent bloat. In 2024, lifetime performance of grass-clover vs grass-only swards will be compared for a suckler calf-to-beef system (from birth through to finish). The latest results of this experiment will be available at BEEF2024 on June 26. There will also be information available on the impact of red clover on the performance of suckler beef and dairy-beef cattle.



## Keeping children safe on the farm

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

During June and the busy summer months, the health and safety of children is of utmost importance on farms. Parents or guardians must instruct, encourage and guide children and young people to keep them safe on the farm. Key approaches include a secure play area for younger children and supervision of children and young people when present on the farm. However, children and young people should be kept clear of high-risk activities such as silage harvesting and slurry spreading. When young people are involved in farm

work, the task should be age appropriate and they should be adequately supported. The Teagasc Jessy's Smart Kids newsletter series for children can be downloaded from the Teagasc website. These provide enjoyable and motivating puzzles and quizzes for kids related to farm safety. To learn more scan the QR code with your smartphone to view the video on child safety on the farm: <https://youtu.be/MY84GesnyzU?t=2>.



Central diagram: SIGNPOST (Supporting the Farm Business) and teagasc (Teagasc - The National Centre for Research, Education and Training in Agriculture).

- Cut N fertiliser rate on grass clover swards** (Green box with clover icon)
- Top-dress NBPT Urea (protected urea) to spring cereals** (Yellow box with urea icon)
- Target cattle slurry to silage fields & adjust N rates for slurry N** (Orange box with slurry icon)
- Check soil results and apply lime now** (Blue box with tractor icon)
- Use Dairy Beef Index (DBI) when using beef bred AI bulls on your dairy cows** (Dark blue box with cow icon)
- Monitor breeding performance to ensure fertility targets are met** (Purple box with cow icon)