

TILLAGE

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Winter cereals

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Winter cereals are well established this season thanks to earlier sowing and good growth in October and November. The priority this month will be fertiliser. While most crops received a herbicide last autumn, it is important to inspect fields to determine if follow-up treatment is needed. Oats and advanced winter barley crops will require a growth regulator by the end of the month.



**AIM TO APPLY
THE MAIN
SPLIT OF
NITROGEN BY**

GS31

on winter barley.

Every year, crop damage occurs due to tank mixes that are not suited to early season crop and weather conditions. Mixing growth regulators, herbicides, and trace elements can often lead to problems. Active crop growth is essential to prevent crop damage from early season sprays. If unsure, consult your agronomist for advice on safe tank mixes.

Winter barley

Aim to apply the main split of nitrogen (N) by GS31. Sulphur (S – 15kg/ha) and trace element deficiencies (based on soil analysis and field history) should also be applied before GS31.

Target growth regulation on crops with a high lodging risk at GS30. A follow-up treatment can be applied at GS32-39 if required. Moddus/Medax Max plus 1.0L/ha CCC can be applied from GS30 but needs active growth for it to be effective.

Most crops received a herbicide last autumn but where a tidy up is required, use a sulfonylurea/Zypar/Galaxy/Hurler,

etc., depending on weeds present. Active growth and high rates are needed to control overwintered weeds. It is too late to control annual meadow grass.

Winter wheat

Apply 40-50kg/ha of N as the first split in mid March or by GS30. Increase rates to 75kg/ha for thin crops, second wheat or where take-all is a risk. Generally divide the N applications one-quarter:one-half:one-quarter over three splits.

Apply the main split by GS31 and the last by GS39.

Where grass weeds are present Pacifica Plus/Monolith plus Biopower are options. Broadway Star/Manhattan plus supported adjuvant is a strong brome option where annual meadow grass has already been controlled. Avoid crops under stress and be careful of tank mixes.

Winter oats

The first application of approximately 50% of the total N requirement should be applied by GS30 (early to mid March). Where no autumn herbicide has been applied treat with a sulfonylurea (Cameo Max/Ally Max) and a suitable partner to match weed spectrum.

The most successful plant growth regulator (PGR) strategy in Teagasc trials is a two-split approach, with the first application at GS30/31 followed by a second at GS32. The second will have a greater shortening effect. Remember to only apply PGRs when there is active growth and avoid frost and large tank mixes.



Spray winter barley crop during periods of active growth to prevent spray damage.



Aim to spread the first N on winter wheat by GS30.

Winter oilseed rape

This season, oilseed rape crops show significant variation in canopy size. In areas where pigeons were not an issue, crops have developed large canopies, leading to N savings. However, many fields have been heavily grazed and will require higher N rates. Crops with a green area index (GAI) below 1.0 will need 225kg/ha of N, with the first application as soon as growth starts. In contrast, crops with a GAI of 2.0 will require only 130kg/ha, and the first split can be delayed until mid March.

Spring crops

Spring beans

Beans make good financial sense with a forward price of €240/t on offer, in addition to guaranteed income from the protein payment, which is estimated to be €500/ha for 2025. Beans are more profitable than spring feed barley and also increase profitability across the rotation. Last year's experience showed that sowing beans in April leads to a late harvest, so target to have beans sown by mid March. In addition to a late harvest, the yield potential of beans is reduced when sown after mid March. However, do not compromise on seedbed conditions. Aim for a target plant population of 25-30 plants/m². Increase target plant population to 40 plants/m² for later sowing or on unproductive soils. A thousand grain weight (TGW) of 550g will need a sowing rate of 206kg/ha (13.1st/ac). Take note of the TGW on the bag as big seed requires high seed rates. It is essential that pre-emergence residual herbicides are

used. The main pre-emergence herbicide options are: Nirvana 4.0-4.5L/ha; Nirvana 2.5 plus Defy 4.0L/ha; Stallion 3.0L/ha; and, Chanon/Emerger 2.5L/ha plus Defy 2.5L/ha.

Spring barley

There is an excellent choice of varieties on the 2025 Recommended List. It is worth taking some time to study the recommended list and select a variety that is suitable for your farm. There are a good few varieties with the 'full package' (good straw and resistance to disease), which can save on growing costs. Aim to sow 350 seeds/m² to establish 300 seeds/m² in good conditions. Consult the bag for the TGW.

Pig slurry

Pig slurry is a valuable source of N, phosphorus (P), potassium (K) and trace elements, and is widely available to tillage farmers. Each 1,000 gallons is the equivalent of a 50kg bag of 19-7-20 at 4% dry matter

(DM) and has a value of €33 (**Figure 1**). It is important to use a hydrometer to assess DM before application to ensure correct rate. Pig slurry can significantly reduce the fertiliser costs for spring crops but it is

essential to incorporate within three to six hours to maximise N recovery. Nutrient management planning is essential. Contact your advisor to ensure you balance nutrients effectively.

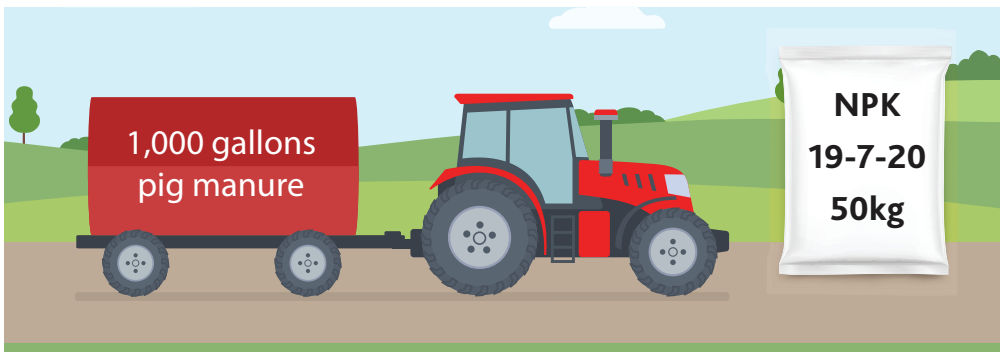


FIGURE 1: 1,000 gallons of pig manure is equivalent to a 50kg bag of 19-7-20, and is worth €33.

Teagasc tillage podcast

For all the latest tillage news, the Teagasc tillage podcast is available on the Teagasc website, Apple Podcasts, Spotify or by scanning the QR code.



Plan workload

With field operations increasing, it is important to plan your workload and avoid rushing. Be vigilant to avoid injuries associated with being crushed. High-risk areas include raised loads like bulk bags of fertiliser, raised machines and being in contact with a moving vehicle. Stay vigilant and stay clear of crush zones.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Be careful when moving large fertiliser bags.