



Winter Feeding



Liam Quinn Teagasc Signpost Programme

The recent onset of wet weather has resulted in most dairy farms having no choice but to house cows. Where grazing is possible, it should continue, but farmer's now need to ask themselves the following questions in the build up to the 2023/2024 winter period:

Do I have enough silage?

A recent Teagasc fodder survey took place to assess forage stocks throughout the country. The overall result showed that 75% of farms have surplus feed available for the coming winter period. The proportion of farms short of feed ranged from 9% to 15% depending on region, with the Northwest tighter for feed supply than average. The survey also identified a cohort of 10% to 20% of farms (depending on region) that are at risk of being tight

for winter feed, depending on duration of winter. If you are unsure as to whether or not you have enough feed available for the coming months, a fodder budget can be created for your farm. This will identify if you have a surplus or deficit. It is best to take action now if fodder is in short supply.

What is the quality of my silage?

The national fodder survey also identified that less than 10% of the farms included had tested the quality of their silage. Now it is easy to say that regardless of quality, silage stocks in the yard will have to be used, but it is surprising the information that can be obtained from a silage sample especially if you want to maximise performance and monitor your costs.

Dry Matter Digestibility (DMD) is the key measure when looking at a silage sample. The higher this figure is the better. Good quality silage typically ranges

75+ DMD. This high-quality silage is suitable for milking cows. Do not forget to keep some of this silage for the spring for cows after calving where possible. A silage with a DMD of 70-75 should be fed to young stock and they should be supplemented with 1-2kg of concentrates to maintain growth. Where DMD levels are below 70 this silage is suitable for dry cows, but body condition score should be monitored carefully to avoid over or under conditioning cows before calving.

Crude Protein values range between 9 – 16%. Good quality samples should be in the moderate to high range, which would indicate a young leafy grass high in DMD.

UFL is another important measure with top quality silage samples achieving 0.90 UFL but 0.70 UFL more common. Higher UFL means more feed energy for milk solids and weight gain. Intake Value also known as FIM g/kg LW^{0.75}.

This is an important measure often forgotten about. Dry matter intake is a major factor that limits performance. FIM is un-supplemented silage intake potential expressed per kg of metabolic live weight. FIM ranges from 70 to 120 and again the higher the value the better. Poorer quality silage will result in concentrate feeding to maintain performance, thus increasing costs.

If good silage is in short supply, where is it most effective?

Where good quality silage is available, but in short supply, this should be prioritised for replacement weaning heifers. It is of upmost importance to have this group of animals meeting their target weights throughout the rearing period. Remember these are the next generation that will fill the bulk tank so their performance and longevity in the herd is vital.



Congratulations to the Clarke Family on representing Arrabawn Co Op at the recent NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk awards in Ballymaloe House.

Managing rainwater on farms

The increasing intensity of rainfall due to climate change is an additional challenge for farmers to adapt to particularly as this can occur at any time during the year. Over the past 12 months, Ireland had its wettest October on record in 2022, its wettest March on record earlier this year and also its wettest July on record. While the impacts on productivity and day to day activity are obvious, farmers need to start to consider how best to manage their farms so as the farm infrastructure can cope with this excess water and minimise the risk to water quality. This is particularly important in the farmyard and on land that is highly connected to the drainage network.

To help manage this excess water on your farm you first need to know how it flows through your farmyard or fields. The EPA have generated maps that show the flow pathways of water over land, and these are a useful guide.

However, it is important to 'ground truth' these maps to ensure they are accurate. Farmers can manage their farming activities in these 'critical source areas' (CSAs), for example, avoid spreading slurry in the overland flow pathway area when heavy rain is forecast as this reduces the risk of the slurry being washed away. They also show where water enters the drainage network (drains, watercourses, etc.) and this is important as farmers can then locate measures to help minimise contaminant losses to water. Establishing riparian zones and planting trees, retaining, or installing wetlands, hedgerows, ponds, or bunds all can help capture nutrient and sediment from reaching the watercourse.

The same methodology can help in the farmyard. Rainwater moves across the yard and typically is channelled to a drain that takes the water away from the yard and into the drainage network. If this water flows across soiled yard areas, then this water can become contaminated with nutrients, sediment, and pathogens. By spending time to assess where the water moves through the yard a farmer can then take actions to minimise the losses of contaminants. The first thing a farmer should do is to try and reduce the volume of clean water that flows through soiled areas. Having gutters and downpipes from shed roofs in proper working order and having the water piped directly to an outfall drain is a simple and effective method of controlling

clean water.

However how many farms can say that these are in place? Where water flows across the yard from clean areas then consideration should be given to installing diversions for the water to prevent it from entering soiled areas. This will help reduce the volume of contaminated soiled water that needs to be collected and land spread.

Recent changes to the GAP regulations have increased

the storage requirement for soiled water so spending time installing measures to reduce the volume of soiled water generated could help reduce the capacity of storage required. On some farms located on a slope, consideration should also be given to water that enters the yard through overland flow from fields that are sloping towards the yard. Measures should be installed to intercept this water and divert it away from the yard.

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Farm Sustainability Section Signpost Advisory Programme

- On low K index soils, apply 50% Muriate of Potash when closing up paddocks
- Review your parasite control plan for liver fluke going into the housing period
- Order your protected urea for 2024
- Continue to spread lime where conditions allow
- Soil sample your farm
- Test your silage

and sustainability actions that will be appropriate and impactful on their farms. Participating farmers will be given the opportunity to commit to taking action for their farms.

AgNav – Know My Number – Make My Plan

A "Know My Number – Make My Plan" component of the programme, supported by AgNav the Sustainability Digital Platform, will allow farmers to see and understand their carbon emissions and sequestration profile as a baseline on which to act. A team of 21 Signpost climate advisors are here to support this programme.

AgNav is a programme that calculates the greenhouse gas emissions for a farm. It collates data from ICBF plus Bord Bia and uses Teagasc's life cycle assessment models to calculate the emissions produced on a farm. To find your emissions number, you need to sign up for the Signpost Advisory Programme.

With advisory support, farmers will make a plan to improve by adopting positive changes and technologies, and advisors will help them with the implementation of the plan and tracking of progress.

This will also create trust and build capacity for supporting the adoption of new technologies as they emerge. The ambition of the programme is to engage with 50,000 farmers between now and 2030. Use your phone to scan the image below to sign up for the programme.



Teagasc's Signpost programme is open for business throughout the country. Twenty-one dedicated advisors are in place. Their sole mission is to help you to contribute to the emissions target reduction set for our industry.

This public programme will be available to all farmers. It will build on the network of Signpost Demonstration Farms by providing enhanced advisory and training support to farmers to commit to, select and implement climate

NOVEMBER SPECIALS



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Milk Quality Section

Culture and Sensitivity testing

Samples should be taken from Individual cows which have a high SCC or recently had masitis. Samples should ideally not be taken from bulk tanks as there can be cross-contamination and results can be inaccurate.

Samples should be taken early in the week, to ensure samples are fresh. Below are some simple steps to ensure samples are taken in the correct way.

Sample bottles should be sterile. DO NOT use bottles that have any kind of preservative tablet. These samples can not be used for culture and sensitivity.

If you need sample bottles please ask your milk advisor or lorry driver for extra bottles.

Sampling technique:

1. Label the bottle with cows number before starting
2. Teat dip should be used to clean the teat, remove large/visible dirt from teat.
3. Use an alcohol wipe to scrub clean the teat end for at least 5 seconds.
4. Discard the first 2-3 strips of milk on the ground. You can take a couple of strips from each quarter into one sample bottle.
5. Store the milk in a fridge (4°C) until collection/drop off.

If you need any help or advice around taking samples or understanding results, give Paddy on a call on 087 0963869.

Silage Taint in Milk

Silage has been the prevailing type of preserved forage for cattle feeding in many countries. Carry-over of some components from silage to cow's milk has been of concern. Milk can gain a bad smell from a stable atmosphere if silage, particularly of poor quality, is fed.

Deoxynivalenol and zearalenone are the main mycotoxins formed in silage. Their negative traits are reduced by lactic acid bacteria in silage and natural rumen bacteria. The excretion of the mycotoxins in milk is generally low. A pH of 3.8 is desirable to ensure sufficient lactic acid is present. If the pH is around 5.0-5.2 it allows a buildup of butyric acid bacteria* (rancid butter taste!), Listeria and Clostridia.

Silages can be a pool of the undesirable bacteria and produce volatile compounds which become airborne. These volatile gases are absorbed by the milk fat during milking if not through the cow's digestive system.

Milk contamination with these bacteria can be decreased by the prevention of silage deacidification following air access, and by improving the environment, cow hygiene and by good milking hygiene.

*High butyric acid in the silage can be easily converted to ketone bodies which in turn will taint the cow's breath and milk, giving off the smell of 'shoe polish'.

It all comes down to making good silage, clean grass, high sugar, low nitrogen, low potash. Well rolled and compacted in the pit or bale to remove all oxygen – a rare occurrence these days!

Low lactose in late lactating Cows

What is lactose in milk?

Lactose is a natural sugar that is secreted in the udder of the cow. The presence of lactose in the milk gives milk its sweet taste. When lactose levels fall below a certain threshold (~4.25%) the milk is difficult to process. This is why we impose penalties when lactose levels fall below their minimum threshold.

Why does lactose fall in Autumn?

Due to changes in the physiology and metabolism of the mammary gland in late lactation the lactose content in milk declines, coinciding with the decline in milk production. In an autumn calving herd where cows are calving over a 6-month period there are no major declines in milk constituents as it is balanced by cows at both ends of lactation. However, the problem is much more pronounced in a spring calving herd where all of the cows have calved in a 12-week period, and they enter into late lactation at the same time.

Management recommendations to help maintain milk lactose levels:

1. Monitor yield of cows, dry off any cows producing less than 8 litres/cows/day.
2. If average herd yield is less than 10 litres/cow/day then dry off the whole herd.
3. Cows with high SCCs produce low lactose milk, at any stage of lactation. Dry off these cows.

Nutritional recommendations to address falling milk lactose levels:

Nutrition also has a role to play. In late lactation there will also be a more marked impact on lactose levels if cows are 'underfed' in terms of dry matter intake and energy intake not being high enough to maintain yield. This year cows still milking 15 litters have low lactose levels, indicating a severe shortage on energy intake.

1. Energy and protein intake in late lactation influence milk yield and milk constituents so it is essential that the cow's diet is sufficient to produce the volume of milk without using her own body reserves.
2. As the grazing rotation is being lengthened to close off paddocks it is important to supplement cows with a high energy dairy nut, protein 16-18%. This year levels will vary 2-6 kgs depending on milk yield, grass supply and grass quality.

Penalties for low Lactose

Over the next few weeks please monitor your lactose results. Lactose levels are tested after every collection and texted out to the farmer. The letter L in the text message stands for Lactose. The following penalties apply for low lactose levels.

- Lactose greater than 4.25 = No penalty
- Lactose less than 4.25 = 2 cent per litre penalty
- Lactose less than 4.00 = 5 cent per litre penalty

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Thermoduric Management During Winter

Checking your bulk tank and milking machine is important. Check your claw pieces regularly by opening the claw pieces at the end of the line to ensure there is no build up, this will tell you whether they are getting enough water, if the hot water reaching them is hot enough and if your detergents are effective.

Check you have enough hot water; it is the perfect time to upgrade your hot water system if you are drying off and require an updated system. There are many options available – electric, gas, dairy geyser, solar.

Strong solids in late lactation can be challenging when it comes to cleaning your machine. If using a liquid detergent, we would recommend using a high concentration caustic powder once a week to help ensure good cleanliness.

If your cows are housed full-time or in and out, their teats are dirtier than if they

were out full time. Improper or no washing and drying of teats is how the bacteria are introduced to your machine in the first place, and allow thermoduric bacteria to contaminate the milk, liners, milk line and milk tank so these really need to be cleaned before cluster attachment. Keep the cow's environment clean, dry, and free from accumulations of waste silage and slurry to avoid contamination of teats and reduce bacteria levels. Maintaining farm roadways and gaps as well as cleaning collecting yards, passageways and cubicles daily will also reduce bacteria levels.

Ensure you are using the right wash routines for the products you are using. Ensure you are using the correct number of descale washes stated by the product provider to ensure you are getting adequate cleanliness. Peracetic acid in an additional final rinse daily is beneficial to disinfect the machine.

Managing The Dry Cow Period

The period between drying off and before calving is a pivotal phase in a dairy cow's life, known as the transition period. This stage marks the cow's shift from a non-lactating state to preparing for calving and subsequent lactation. The importance of providing a good dry cow mineral in the diet during this phase cannot be overstated.

A well-formulated dry cow mineral diet plays a crucial role in preventing metabolic disorders commonly associated with the calving period. Issues like milk fever, ketosis, retained placenta, and other health concerns can be significantly minimized with the provision of essential nutrients.

The benefits of a good dry cow mineral in the diet extend to the calf as well. A well-nourished cow during the dry period ensures that the calf receives vital nutrients and antibodies from the colostrum for optimal growth, a robust immune system, and sturdy bone development.

Ensuring proper nutrition during the dry cow period is essential to support the cow's transition.

The right balance of minerals and vitamins in the dry cow mineral aids in preparing the cow's body for calving and the subsequent lactation process.

Trace Pak Pre Calver from Arrabawn

Mineral supplement for cows 6 – 8 weeks before calving. It has been developed over the past 20 years to meet the requirements of the Arrabawn co-op catchment area – especially with regard to high Molybdenum and low Copper, Zinc, iodine, and Selenium availability – including Chelates for maximum effect. It has benefits in cow health at calving, fertility, lameness, and possible cell count after calving. Feed 100 -150 grams/per head per day.

Arrabawn Together we grow

TracePak

TracePak

Pre Calver Mineral Supplement

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**Interested in Milk Recording in 2024???
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to get set up to milk record your herd in 2024**

NOVAVET ANIMAL HEALTH PRODUCTS



MASTOMINT COOL-GEL & MASPREP



FOR MASTITIS CONTROL

- These 2 products work more effectively and get better Mastitis clearance when used together.
- Use 2 tubes after milking and at the first signs of cruds or swelling.
- Rub Mastomint Cool Gel vigorously into the infected quarter after tubing.
- Continue to apply Mastomint Cool Gel and 1 Masprep tube after each milking for 3-4 days depending on the quarter.
- The foremilk on the next milkings will be very high in S.C.C. & must be discarded, as it will raise the average S.C.C. of the herd. This is the normal means the udder has of discarding the dead cells from the infection.
- Mastomint helps by drawing the contents of Masprep tube to the infected area which is usually at the top of the quarter. It also helps draw blood to this infected area which helps the white blood cells circulate and fight the infection.
- When Mastitis infections get established it causes the milking producing 'Avelol' cells to swell and thus prevents the blood flow to this area, hindering the animals natural healing.
- It is difficult to treat infections whilst cow is in high milk production as the milk flow is down and out of the quarter twice daily, making it hard for any treatment to reach the area of infection.
- For cows high in S.C.C. this treatment method, Mastomint & Masprep can be used up to 5 days to clear the latent infections.
- For chronic high S.C.C. cows, the best practise is 3-4 days prior to drying off a course of antibiotics. Use a good dry-off routine and that cow has then been given best chance to clear for the coming lactation.

DRYPREP

A natural aid to udder health in the dry cow period

- For use at final milking.
- Quarters that showed high S.C.C. & Mastitis in milking period will benefit from using 2 tubes.
- Active for up to 4 weeks.
- No withdrawal period.

Contains: Propolis, Calendula, Echinacea, Salvia officinalis in a Glycerin base to 10mls.



NOVAVET'S Blue Seal

Dry Cow & Heifer Teat Sealant Gel

- Short term teat sealant.
- Acts as barrier to pathogens.
- Stops milk leaking.

Available in 250ml & 500ml



BUZZ-OFF GEL FLY REPELLANT GEL

For use on dry cows and heifers as a teat barrier to prevent fly strike & summer Mastitis.

Available in 750g & 1.5kg



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