



2024 NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards

The rolling fields of Derry, Eyrescourt, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, are home to one of Arrabawn Co-op's standout farms, run by Michael Larkin and his family. This 170-cow enterprise, nominated as Arrabawn's representative for the prestigious 2024 NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards, showcases the epitome of family farming and top-tier dairy management. Michael Larkin won the award for "Lowest SCC Award" at the awards ceremony on Tuesday October 1st in Lyrath Estate County Kilkenny.



A business graduate from the University of Limerick, Michael worked in a bank prior to returning home to farm. He ensures that every aspect of the farm runs with precision, but it is truly a family affair. His mother, Marion, plays a vital role, undertaking numerous tasks, including the post-milking cleanup and overseeing the cows crossing the road with the same care as a local school's lollipop lady. His father, Michael Senior, brings expertise in machinery and crops, while he and Marion work hand-in-hand in rearing the calves. Outside

of farming, Michael Senior is the secretary of the local point-to-point and has a passion for horses, with the Larkin family training multiple point-to-point winners from their land.



Linda, Michael's wife, manages the farm's administration. They're supported by a full-time farmworker, Steven, and a relief milker. Together, they ensure smooth operations and excellent herd care. Central to the Larkins' strategy is their focus on improving the herd's EBI, currently at 239, with replacements at 284, while breeding for increased milk solids, currently averaging 487 kg/cow. 30% of their herd is AI-bred to Friesians, and 70% to beef breeds, with a shift to sexed semen for Friesians in 2024.

Animal health is a key priority.

SenseHub collars provide continuous monitoring of each cow, and a proactive approach to health ensures both cows and calves receive a range of vaccines to reduce the likelihood of disease and the need for antibiotic use. Dry cow therapy is minimised, with 70% of cows receiving sealants only. Hoof health is another focal point, with well-maintained roadways, foot baths, and an on-site foot-trimming crate keeping hoof health in peak condition.

Sustainability is deeply embedded in the farm's ethos. The farm boasts a carbon footprint of just 0.78 kg CO₂ per litre of milk. A dedicated 2-hectare wildlife buffer zone helps preserve biodiversity, while Michael adheres to a comprehensive ASSAP water quality plan to ensure the farm's impact on local watercourses is minimal. The entire farm has been reseeded, with red clover on 23 acres for silage and white clover incorporated into a quarter of the grazing platform. Impressively, no cases of bloat have been encountered. Slurry spreading



is undertaken using LESS machines, fertiliser is spread using a GPS system, and protected urea is used throughout the land.

Michael balances his farm work with his passion for hurling. Still playing for Meelick-Eyrescourt and managing their junior team, he ensures farm activities wind down by 6 p.m. most days. Weekends are reserved for essential tasks only, and there is a regular weekend relief milker. This approach allows him to maintain an enviable work-life balance.



With an impressive combination of sustainability, milk quality, animal care, and family dedication, the Larkin farm stands as a shining example of the best of Irish dairy farming, unafraid to showcase its excellence on the national stage.

Key stats:

Cow numbers:	170
Herd EBI:	239
Milk Supply (ltrs):	959,098
Concentrates kg / cow:	576
Milk solids kg / cow:	487
Fat % (weighted):	4.6
Protein % (weighted):	3.74
Milking units:	18
TBC ('000 weighted):	11
SCC ('000 weighted):	69
Proportion of herd using selective dry cow:	70%
Proportion of nitrogen protected urea used:	80%
Grass measures per year:	20+
Carbon footprint:	0.78

Arrabawn Co Op would like to congratulate Michael Larkin and his family on winning the very prestigious award of lowest SCC Award among the eleven other finalists and would like to thank them for representing Arrabawn Co Op to the highest of standards.



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Protect your profits with responsible parasite control at housing

2024 has been challenging in many ways with endless wet weather and we've now reaching housing time feeling as though we've barely had a summer. Strategic parasite control is critically to ensuring the health, welfare and productivity of our herds during the winter months. Achieving the balance between responsible use of medicines and maximising productivity is essential and your animal health advisor and vet can support you.

The key parasite concerns at housing time include:

- Gastrointestinal (gut) worms
- Lungworm
- Liver fluke
- External parasites- mites & lice

Gastrointestinal roundworms

At grazing cattle will be exposed to gastrointestinal roundworms. Animals with good immunity (which can take 2+ grazing seasons to develop) should harbour relatively

low burdens at housing time. Any animals which have not yet acquired this immunity, or are debilitated in some way, could potentially be harbouring a burden which will impact performance and welfare.

Ostertagia worms (one of the most common in cattle) can encyst in the abomasum (4th stomach) and erupt later in the housing period resulting in severe scour. Where cattle are at risk of this, ensure they are treated soon after housing.

Lungworm

During the grazing season, in areas where lungworm is an issue, cattle will ingest lungworm larvae which will migrate from the gut to the respiratory tract. In the lungs, they cause damage and inflammation leading to clinical signs such as coughing, difficulty breathing and potentially sudden death. When housed, the risk of respiratory disease increases in general and any animals with lungworm will be at higher risk still.

Liver fluke

Due to a wet spring and summer, mud snail conditions have been optimum allowing for replication of the liver fluke parasites. This means we potentially face a high challenge this autumn and early winter. The liver fluke parasite tracks through liver tissue causing damage to blood vessels and inflammation. If treating animals at housing, remember that different products target different ages of fluke. Your animal health professional and vet can advise on appropriate products at different times.

External parasites

Lice are the most important external parasites of cattle at housing time and can cause irritation, skin disease and self-trauma from scratching. Biting lice (which feed on skin debris) usually respond better to external treatments such as pour on/spot on solution. Sucking lice (which feed on blood) also respond to injectable products.

Preparing for dry off this winter

Clare Clabby

As we come to the end of the lactation for spring calving herds it is time to prepare for drying off and the dry period. A successful dry period is the foundation for a successful lactation in the following year. The dry period is an important time to cure any existing infections in the herd, however it is also critical to prevent any new infections from occurring to achieve a successful dry period.

There are a few actions that can be carried out in the next few weeks to prepare for drying-off.

1. Review bulk tank SCC

The bulk tank SCC can be reviewed at this point of the year. Herds with an average bulk tank SCC of 200,000 or less should consider if their herd is suitable for selective dry cow treatment. Please contact your milk advisor or vet when considering selective dry cow treatment. Some herds may find that their bulk tank SCC has been increased considerably from early or mid-lactation. This may indicate that there are subclinical infections spreading throughout the herd. It is recommended to contact your vet or milk advisor on what steps to take to control this. Herds with an average bulk tank SCC over 200,000 consider reviewing their milk recording results, milking routine and mastitis management to reduce SCC in the following lactation.

2. Milk recording

Recent research shows the last milk recording within 30 to 45 days of dry-off is the most accurate when identifying cows without infections

Herds that are already milk recording, aim to have their last milk recording within 30 to 45 days (no more than 60 days) of dry-off. If drying off cows in batches, it is important to factor in when the last cows will be dried off when booking a date for your milk recording.

For herds that haven't been milk recording, one milk recording 30 to 45 days before dry-off would give an accurate picture of cows SCC before dry-off.

3. Clip cows tails

As weather conditions deteriorate it can be harder to keep cows legs and udder clean. Keeping cows tails clipped helps reduce the presence of dung on legs and udders.

4. Review cows yields and calving dates

Review the milk yields from your last milk recording and identify cows that may need to be dried off early. Cows should be dried off if yielding less than 9 litres per day. Herds that aren't milk recording can use the bulk tank volumes to calculate the average yield per cow. If using this method, cows should be dried off when the average yield is 11 litres per day to prevent over milking of first lactation cows. For best outcomes when drying off with sealer only, it is recommended cows have a milk yield of less than 15 litres per day when drying off.

Review expected calving dates for next spring from AI records or scanning results. Cows with low Body Condition

Score less than 2.5 (thin cows)

and first lactation cows may benefit from a longer dry period. The optimal dry period length is 60-80 days. This allows time for old cells and tissue in the udder to be removed and allow for the repair and growth of new cells. This process optimises milk production and helps reduce SCC in the following lactation. Dry period lengths should be a minimum of 30 days.

5. Reduce milk yield

Take steps to reduce milk yield with cows producing more than 15 litres per day approximately a week before planned dry-off. This can be achieved by implementing a maintenance diet, by reducing cow energy intake. Reduce concentrate feeding to less than 2 kg per day. If cows are housed, feed low DMD silage or a straw and silage mix to reduce energy intake. Restrict grass allocations for cows that are still grazing. Water should not be restricted and should be provided at all times throughout the drying off process.

For some high yielding cows, transitioning to once a day milking 3-4 days before drying off may help reduce yield.

The dry-off procedure

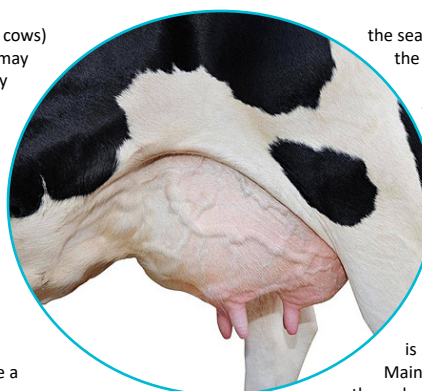
At the last milking, milk cows out as usual. Teat spray/dip can be applied as normal and teats dried afterwards with a paper towel.

1. Clean teats

Using the cotton swabs soaked in surgical spirit, clean teat ends until dirt is no longer visible. Clean front teats first, then followed by the rear teats, see Figure 1. This avoids contaminating the cleaned teat with your arm.

2. Administer tubes

When administering dry cow tubes, start in the opposite direction as you cleaned, rear teats are infused with tubes first followed by the front teats, see Figure 1. Again, this avoids contaminating the cleaned teats. When administering tubes the tip of the nozzle is inserted into the teat canal and the contents infused. If possible, avoid inserting the nozzle fully into the teat canal as this may cause damage internally, particularly in first lactation cows or cows with small teats. It is recommended when administering antibiotic tubes, the antibiotic is massaged up into the udder. When administering the sealer, pinch the base of the teat before inserting the nozzle of the sealer tube to ensure sealer remains in the teat cistern. When administering both an antibiotic tube and a sealer tube, it recommended to work on each teat individually, in other words administer the antibiotic tube followed by



the sealer tube to one teat before moving on to the next teat.

3. Teat spray/dip

Spray or dip all teats after administering tubes. It is recommended to leave cows to stand 20-30 minutes after drying-off. If cows are housed, ensure cubicles are clean and dry before cows have access.

The Dry Period

It is recommended a maintenance diet is maintained for 3-4 days after drying off.

Maintain housing in a clean hygienic manner throughout the dry period. There are two time points in the dry period when cows are most at risk of picking up a new infection. This is 2 weeks after drying off (when the udder is stopping milk production) and 2 weeks before calving (when the udder is preparing for milk production again). It is recommended cubicles are cleaned and limed twice daily at these high-risk periods. However, it is recommended that cubicles are cleaned and limed daily for the duration of the dry period to reduce the risk of new infections, particularly in herds using selective dry cow treatment.

Some helpful tips for drying off

- Drying-off is a separate job to milking. If possible, separate cows to be dried off from the main herd of cows the day before.
- If possible, dry off cows in small manageable groups of 20-30 cows at a time. In larger milking parlours (over 10 units), it may be helpful to milk half a row at a time to keep cows from getting agitated if left standing too long.
- Dry off cows in groups according to their treatment. If using sealer only on cows, do them separately to those getting antibiotic tubes to avoid mix ups.
- Prepare cotton swabs for cleaning teats, these can be made up by soaking cotton wool in surgical spirits. Store these swabs in plastic food bags to help keep clean when drying-off and to keep surgical spirits from evaporating. Do not prepare more than a day or two before planned use. These swabs can be used to clean gloves between cows.
- A head torch/lamp can be useful to improve visibility when drying-off cows.
- Some sealer tubes can be difficult to push the plunger, especially if stored in a cool place. Storing sealers in a warm place the night before can help reduce the stiffness in the plunger. Alternatively, place the bucket containing sealer tubes into a bucket of warm water, to indirectly warm up the sealers, see Figure 2. AVOID PUTTING TUBES DIRECTLY INTO WATER. Putting sealers directly into water can potentially contaminate tubes with bacteria and cause an outbreak of mastitis.

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Reducing Phosphorus Loss to Water

There has been a lot of focus on Nitrogen in media coverage in recent times, but it is another nutrient, Phosphorus, that is causing issues in many watercourses draining heavy soils. Nutrient application followed by significant rainfall on poorly draining and low permeability soils leads to overland flow transporting nutrients to waterbodies. Targeted fertiliser application at optimum times throughout the main growing season, particularly on low permeability soils, along with suitable land management can help mitigate against the risk of phosphorus & sediment making their way to our rivers and streams.

Farmers should have a Nutrient Management Plan for the farm prepared and implemented to ensure the nutrients in slurry, FYM and chemical fertiliser are directed to where most needed. Slurry should only be applied when soil temperatures are above 6 degrees and ground conditions and weather forecast are suitable. It is important that the applied slurry gets down to the roots of plants such as grass in the growing season, preferably bare fields or fields with low grass cover. On very heavy land it may be necessary to delay spreading until after the first cut silage. Extra slurry storage allows more flexibility on spreading times, particularly in a very wet spring. Under the Nitrates Directive, slurry must not be spread if heavy rain is forecast within 48 hours, but on poorly drained soil this period should be extended further. Spreading slurry with Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS) equipment such as a trailing shoe, dribble bar or the injector system can dramatically reduce losses and improve nutrient efficiency. LESS results in reduced sward contamination which allows more flexibility to spread on heavier covers in improved weather and ground conditions.

A riparian buffer zone is an area adjacent to a water body where no chemical and organic fertilisers, cultivation or spraying can be carried out. These zones vary in width and are required to protect waters from diffuse losses of nutrients, sediment and chemicals. The introduction of trees or rough dense vegetation in these areas can act as a barrier, shade streams and stabilise river banks while the roots can absorb soil nutrients. To be effective, riparian buffer zones must be located at the points on the farm most likely to allow nutrient, sediment or pesticides enter a waterbody. These are often low-lying parts of farms where surface runoff accumulates in high concentration.

Phosphorus does not bind to peat soil particles, so unlike mineral soils, peat soils do not have the capacity to build up a store of phosphorus. Only apply the phosphorus that the plant needs and can use for growth immediately – do not apply excess amounts of P (e.g. reduce slurry rates) as it risks being lost to waterbodies. Sediment loss to water has been identified as a major concern in recent years. If sediment finds its way to the stream, it can settle on the river-bed in slow flow areas, resulting in the loss of macroinvertebrate habitat and spawning ground. Phosphorus binds to sediment and when washed into the watercourse, can cause excess nutrient load and promotes algal blooms which reduce oxygen levels in the stream. Agricultural practices such as land drainage, cattle access drinking points to streams and poor management of farm roadways can lead to loss of sediment & phosphorus.

Mitigation options to reduce sediment loss include:

- Prevent access by livestock into drains and streams and providing alternative drinking water sources.
- Divert all surface runoff from farm roadways to a field or soak pit
- Establish targeted riparian buffer zones
- Employ proper drain maintenance practices including the following:
 - Only carry out drain maintenance during the months July to September
 - Only one side of a drain to be cleaned at a time
 - Drains should not be over-cleaned, retain as much vegetation as possible

- Ensure the bank is sufficiently sloped afterwards to prevent collapse
- Silt/ sediment traps should be in place prior to installing new open drains leading to streams.
- Stone should not be filled to the surface of new field drains.
- When farmers are applying fertilisers, cultivating, grazing or draining land close to watercourses, careful, site specific land management can minimise the risk of Phosphorus and sediment loss and help improve water quality.

Water Quality Discussion Groups held with suppliers in Cork & Carlow during October



Soil Sampling Service

Covering the following areas:

1. East Limerick
2. West Tipperary
3. North Tipperary

Samples taken and dropped to lab.

Results discussed with local Arrabawn sales rep to achieve optimum growing rates.

Contact Cian Ryan on 087 6089974

15 British
Friesian In calf
Heifers

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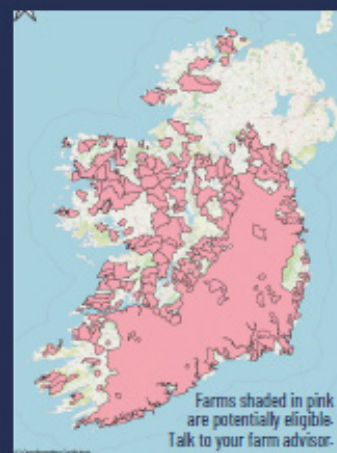
FIVE YEAR PROGRAMME FROM 2023-2027



THE FARMING FOR WATER EIP IS AN AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME DESIGNED TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY

The EIP is open to farmers with land in priority catchments where targeted water quality improvements are needed. Farmers located in these priority catchments are **potentially** eligible for EIP funding and the catchments are identified in the map below.

You can view national water quality maps at www.gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/agriculture



Enviroflex is a sustainability linked loan to support and enable farmers to improve the environmental footprint of their farms



Sustainable farming is becoming increasingly important in the Agri- food supply chain. Bank of Ireland has a long tradition of working with farmers to support their financial needs in an ever – evolving market. Bank of Ireland are committed to working with farmers and the Agri – food supply chain to deliver on national and business commitments into the future. Bank of Ireland is partnering with the Agri – Food industry to deliver Enviroflex, to support action at farm level and improve the

sustainability of farming in Ireland. Working with partners across the Agri industry, Bank of Ireland will provide discounted flexible finance to farmers who can demonstrate they are improving their environmental footprint of their farms.

Enviroflex is designed to support farmers who are taking on environmental initiatives on their farms and who are on a journey to reducing their farms environmental footprint.

Eligible applicants must be a member of the Arrabawn Milk Supplier Sustainability Bonus and applicants must be undertaking at least three measures of the Milk Supplier Sustainability Bonus.

The Arrabawn Milk Supplier Sustainability Bonus contains three measures currently.

1. Protected Fertiliser
2. EBI Improvement
3. Milk Recording

Closing Paddocks for the Winter

As the grazing season comes to a close, some decisions will need to be made. The aim is to have 60% of the paddocks grazed by the end of October and the remaining 40% in November if weather permits. Once a paddock is grazed in October or November it should be closed off until next spring. If weather conditions are good, it can be tempting to leave cows out for an extra few days but it will have a big impact on the covers next spring.

With lower growth rates than expected recently the average farm covers will be lower in some places so extra caution is needed when deciding to close paddocks.

When closing paddocks the order which you do so must be considered. In early February which paddocks tend to flood? Have soft ground? More difficult to graze? Furthest away from the parlour? These paddocks should be grazed towards the start of October/November so that you do not need to graze them until March next year. The cover will be slightly heavy by March but the cows diet will be adjusted to grazing again and able to manage the heavy cover. Also ground condition should have improved making them easier to clean out.

Freshly calved cows in late January or early February have a lower intake of feed, so allowing them to graze slightly lighter covers will ensure a good clean out and encourage good grass growth for the second round.

Fodder Survey Analysis 2024

- 283 responses
- 53% of suppliers surveyed have sufficient fodder for the coming winter.
- Of the 47% suppliers with insufficient fodder, 49% intend to purchase additional fodder, 35% intend to sell surplus stock, and 16% intend to undertake other options i.e. (ration, fodder beet etc.)
- 29% of suppliers would like assistance with fodder budgeting
- 75% of responses were from Tipperary, Galway & Offaly.

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For further information or advice on any subjects or products mentioned in this newsletter

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