

Improving Suckler Efficiency



With BREXIT looming and beef prices remaining relatively unpredictable, farmers must maximise profit earned from within the farm gate by improving efficiency. The Irish Grassland Association (IGA) claim that an extra €500 net profit/cow can be achieved through improved efficiency and the use of better farming practices.

Farmers can improve their farm efficiency by:

- **Improving grassland management** through grass measuring, using a simple rotational grazing system & having a reseeding plan in place on the farm.
- **Calving heifers at 24 months** of age and not the national average of 31.5 months will equate to a saving of €250 per heifer in direct costs (Feed, veterinary, breeding). Teagasc research also shows that calving home-bred replacements at 24 months increased net profit/cow by €84.
- **Improving soil fertility** on the farm can increase grass production by up to 1.5 tonne/DM/ha in the following two-year period which in turn will increase farm stocking rates and overall farm production/profit.

Running a highly efficient drystock farm means that farmers must pay considerable attention to the farms reproductive efficiency:

- **Calving interval** must be 365 days to maximise efficiency. This ensures that non-productive days are kept to a minimum which reduces overall costs and increases productivity. The national average is currently 399 days.
- **Calf mortality** of less than 4% is key. Avoiding hard calvings can be relatively easy as there are plenty of proven sires out there whose progeny arrive small and grow and shape-up quickly. When the calf is born, the 3 2 1 Rule should be used which states that calves should receive 3 litres of milk, within the first 2 hours of life, from the mothers first milk i.e colostrum.

In conclusion, Irish suckler farmers must focus on increasing efficiency through the adoption of improved farming practices. The first step to improving efficiency would be in the area of grassland management and soil fertility. Suckler cow efficiency will not change overnight, the process can be slow but the financial rewards are worth the time and effort.

Beef



Mid-summer grass is not capable of supplying the nutritive demand of the finishing animal due to a reduction in the quality of grass and a rise in the animals energy requirements.

Grass supply this time of year often struggles as you are waiting for after grass to come into the system.

For these reasons it is very important to supplement finishing animals with a high energy dense ration for the last 10 weeks of finishing. Concentrates will speed up weight gain, spare grass and most of all increase profits through improved confirmation & quicker turn-around time.

Grange have recorded a 1kg carcass gain from 10kg of concentrate on mid-summer grass.

The key to successful beef production is a good turnaround time. The longer you have an animal on-board, the more it costs.



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Grassland:

July will see a slow-down in grass growth, unless provisions are made to keep it moving. Applications of CAN or high N compounds at this time of year are very important, at a rate of 1 to 2 bags per acre. The best approach to fertiliser use is little & often, to keep growth moving.

On the more intensive farms, where there is large off-take, it is good practice at this stage to apply a compound like 24-2.2-4.5. Where you intend letting up grass for second cut silage 21-2.2-10 is the compound of choice. In most situations 3 bags per acre should apply enough nutrients along with slurry.



At present only 2% of our pastures are reseeded annually (350,000 acres) and on average our swards only contain 55% perennial ryegrass. This is a disappointing figure after all the publishing of the benefits of reseeding.

We are all aware that grazed grass is our cheapest source of feedstuff and producing it in the shoulders of the year to prolong grazing is a major saving.

Grass Seed

- Contain the newest and best grass varieties.
- Incorporate both high yielding and digestibility traits.
- Based only on tried, tested & proven varieties from the dept of Agriculture recommended list & Teagasc Pasture Profit Index list.
- Guaranteed & proven to stand the test of time.

Harvest 2017:



At long last the grain price appears to be slowly edging upwards. Although price increases are not substantial at present, its moving in a positive direction.

Winter barley harvest has started and early yield indications are good.

The harvest is an extremely busy time on farms and can also be a dangerous time with machines on the move and many working long days, so please take good care and farm safely.

Winter Barley fields & Fodder Crops:

Most winter barley fields will be left idle from now until next October or next spring, meaning land is not been utilized during some of the key growth months of the year. (Some of July, August & September).

A fodder crop like Redstart is an ideal crop to fill this slot.

Benefits include:

Cheap way to boost fodder reserves.

Alternative to limited winter housing.

Alternative to fodder storage & machinery.

Reduces slurry/dung spreading

Fast growing with superb yield potential.

Redstart is a cross between kale & rape so gives you the combined traits of each which includes yield from kale and rapid growth from rape.

Can be grazed 70-90 days after sowing

Approximate Guidelines for Redstart procedures.

July 20 th	Disc field (1 pass should be enough) Apply 2 bpa of 18-6-12. Broadcast 3.5kg of Redstart seed. Roll (Preferably with a flat roller as it gives better consolidation of seedbed).
Aug 10 th	Apply 1lt to 2acres of Stratos ultra to eliminate volunteer barley
Aug 20 th	Apply 1.6 bags per acre of CAN + S

Dogfood VAT Rates:

Following a number of customer enquiries we want to take this opportunity to clarify the VAT rate that applies to dogfood in the Republic of Ireland.

According to revenue rules no dogfood can be sold in the Republic of Ireland VAT free.

In the UK dog food targeted at the working dog is VAT free. This same dog food when imported into Ireland is liable to a VAT rate at 23%. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Confusion arises when dogfood imported from the UK states VAT Free on the bag and also on importation those who utilise their VAT numbers may import dog food from the UK VAT free however this dog food once put for resale in the Republic must have the VAT applied.

Dogfood suppliers with UK VAT numbers that sell you dogfood at 0% VAT are happy to allow the ambiguity continue as they are not the ones responsible for charging the VAT, the retailer is.

The only dog food in the Republic that qualifies for a VAT reduction is Greyhound food. The VAT rate that applies to Greyhound food is 13.5%. All other pet foods are VAT rated at 23%. To qualify for the lower 13.5% VAT rate the bag must clearly state for Greyhound use.

We hope this article helps clear up any concerns you may have had and please feel free to contact our Dogfood Sales Representative David Burke on 086-2509788 should you wish to discuss this matter any further.