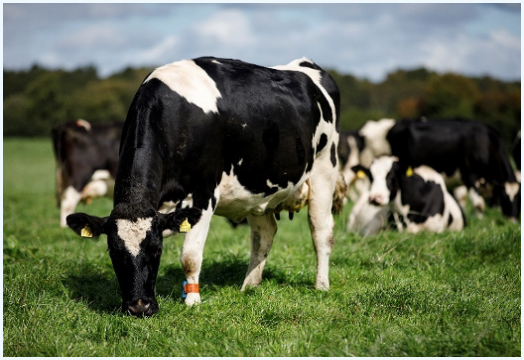
Newsletter MARCH 2021

Getting Set up to Maximise Milk Production from Grass in 2021

By Aisling Claffey - (B.Agr.Sc., Ph.D.) – Ph: 086 0317483

Grazing opportunities were limited on many farms across the month of February. Aim to graze 15% of the farm per week if you have little to no area grazed at this point. This will ensure you maintain a consistent supply of grazed grass in the diet until grass growth can sustain the demands of your herd. As growth rates increase with longer days and milder weather pay particular attention to the re-growth on the first 20-25% grazed and adjust your allocations accordingly to ensure you start your second rotation when these paddocks have a cover of 1300-1500 kg DM/ha (8-10cm).



Spring grass is a high protein feed so consider reducing the crude protein of your dairy nut to 16%, unless you are feeding considerable quantities of low protein forages such as maize/beet in the buffer diet, and pay attention to the energy value (UFL) of that nut.

Maintaining good residuals in the first and second rotation (4cm post-grazing) is key to ensuring better pasture quality in early summer and ensuring you can achieve good milk solids at peak milk production! If you have had trouble with either milk protein or fat percentages over this period in recent years and would like to take a proactive approach to combating that this year, get in touch with me directly or through any member of our team and we will offer you the nutritional support to tackle these!

Has Sub-Clinical and/or Milk Fever Been an Issue for You This Year?

In many cases this year, high Potash forages have contributed to a rise in cases of both sub-clinical milk fever (SCMF) and milk fever on farm. Retained cleanings, mastitis and numerous metabolic disorders are all indicators of SCMF. In addition to producing its own set of problems, SCMF hampers fertility and long-term production on farm, at a significant cost to the farm (c. €300-500/cow).

While many farmers are trying to combat soil fertility issues, excessive levels of K applied in spring results in luxurious uptake by the grass. This in turn leads to higher K levels in the forage, affecting magnesium absorption and calcium mobilisation concurrently, i.e., causes milk fever. Talk to your J Grennan & Sons rep if you would like to avoid this situation next year.

COCCIDIOSIS: Is it costing you more than you think?

By Damien Conboy – (B.Agr.Sc) – Ph: 087 2124036

Coccidiosis is a disease of the intestine caused by single-celled parasites called *Eimeria*. It spreads from one animal to another by contact with infected faeces or ingestion of infected tissue. Clinical signs of this disease are very clear and include diarrhoea, which may become bloody in severe cases and causes rapid weight loss as a result. While most farmers understand and recognise the clinical signs, subclinical coccidiosis is less obvious and only picked up on where poor thrive is noticed.

Coccidia is present in all sheep and over time the immune system can overcome this constant challenge, but at what cost? A healthy gut/intestine is essential for the immune system to overcome challenges such as coccidiosis, crypto, rotavirus, coronavirus and clostridial diseases.

Prevention of coccidiosis is better than cure and can be achieved through good hygiene practices and targeted preventative treatment. Currently preventative treatments include Diclazuril and Toltrazuril, while Decoquinate, known as Decox is the only medicated supplement that can be added to feed.

These days farmers are under increasing pressure from regulatory authorities to reduce their dependence on antibiotics and similar medicines. A viable reduction in use of these products will take a multi-faceted approach involving improved husbandry techniques, breeding and disease preventative programmes which will include a heavier reliance on medicines derived from naturally occurring compounds.

This year we have started to look at a very interesting alternative feed additive which helps prevent coccidiosis. This product is backed by science but developed with on-farm reliability and cost efficiency in mind. Currently we have some on-farm trials running - watch this space! So, if coccidiosis in lambs or calves is a concern on your farm, for more information contact a member of our technical team today.

Is Lepto Lurking in Your Herd?

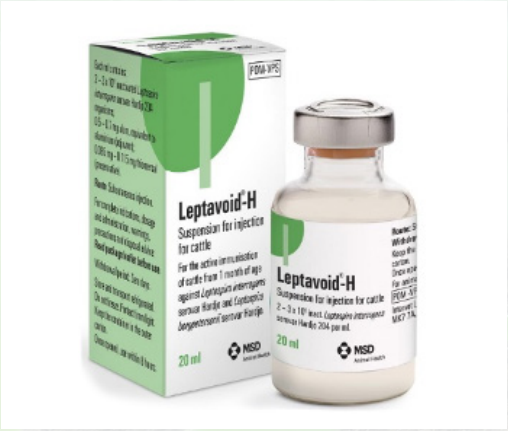
By Aideen Fleury – (Bsc.VN/RVN) – Ph: 057 91 33585

Leptospirosis is one of the most common causes of abortion in cows in Ireland. 79% of Irish herds are exposed to *Leptospira interrogans*. It is a zoonosis, meaning it can cause disease in humans. It is usually acquired from contact with the urine, afterbirth, or aborted foetus of an infected animal or with contaminated water. There are two strains of leptospirosis in Ireland: *L. interrogans hardjo* and *L. borgpetersenii hardjo*.

Leptavoid H is the only vaccine that is licensed to protect against both strains.

Clinical/Subclinical Signs

- Milk Drop - In cows, the first symptom is often a sudden decrease in milk yield.
- Abortions - Usually occur 6-12 weeks after the initial infection. Abortion rates range from up to 30% in herds not previously infected to 5% in herds where leptospirosis is endemic.
- Infertility - The greatest effects of infection on fertility are low pregnancy rates and increased culling.
- Weak calves – Infection in late pregnancy can result in the birth of weak calves that die within a few hours of birth. Diagnosis of leptospiral abortion is based on finding bacteria in the foetus or antibodies from blood samples from the cow.



Vaccination

It is essential to vaccinate heifers before their first pregnancy, to prevent infertility and abortion. Heifers should be vaccinated with a primary course completed at least two weeks before turnout (2 injections 4-6 weeks apart). Cows should receive their annual booster in spring two weeks before turnout to grass. Vaccination with Leptavoid H is proven to increase conception rates where leptospirosis is diagnosed as a cause of infertility. Available at J Grennan & Sons for approx. €2.50/head.

Winter Bean Trial Update

By Paul Mooney – (B.Agr.Sc) – Ph: 086 3532342

Beans are performing very well and are now tillering. Across the 3 sites, they are sown at different seed rates. The present image shows a 12stone/acre rate which would make you think that if all plants put out 4 tillers, they will be way too thick. 7 and 9 stone rates were also used. The 7 stone trial looks very thin but with vast tillering/branching that occurs with winter beans, this rate could be the ideal rate. We will keep you updated in the coming months.

Rules for Early Grass and Silage Fertiliser

By Hilda Dooley - (B.Sc. M.Sc. Ph.D.) Ph: 086 6074729

Rule #1: Soils should be at the optimum pH (6.2-6.5) to maximise fertiliser availability. If soils are not at optimum pH, your J Grennan & Sons rep can help you create a soil fertility plan to get them on target.

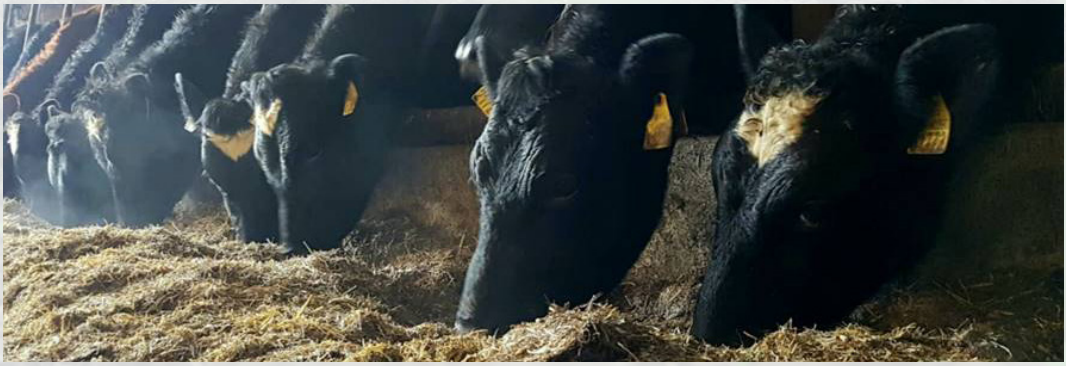
Rule #2: Concentrate on early Nitrogen (N), this will increase NUE and maximise growth.

- Grazing ground will need no more than 23units of N/acre at this time, assuming conditions are suitable.
- Choose straight Urea or, on low P index soils, use a compound (e.g. 23.10.0) where you will see a response in grass growth to early P applications.

Rule #3: On silage ground – to split or not to split?

- Splitting N applications gives the advantage of N being available to support early grass growth.
- Count slurry as your early source of N (4-11units N/1000gal slurry depending on how and when it is spread) and compliment that with the right bagged fertiliser at closing. **At J Grennan & Sons we can blend fertilisers to your specific needs.**
- The positive effects of splitting the N application are reduced the later you get the first split on, and if you are past early March with no N applied, it is then advisable to apply all your N in one go.
- On sulphur deficient soils, there is a case for giving the 1st cut 10-15u S/ac.

Rule #4: Use our new Terra range at closing to reduce your overall nitrogen inputs. Our Terra range contains a bio stimulant which increases N uptake and utilisation leading to similar yields of grass despite a 20-25% reduction in N/ac.



Fertiliser Plans for Silage Ground

By Brian Delaney – (B.Agr.Sc) – Ph: 086 0449529

The key to a successful fertiliser plan, that will put maximum tonnes in the pit, is to soil test and to apply enough nutrients to replace offtakes. Cattle slurry is an ideal foundation for all silage ground because of its high potash (K) content. Due to its high biological oxygen demand, any 1 application of slurry should not exceed 2000 gallons/acre to avoid damaging soil biology. Ideally, slurry should be applied in February or at the latest mid-March to avoid luxury uptake of K, and to allow the clostridial bacteria in the slurry to fall to a safe level (this factor is less of a concern when contamination of the grass is low with the use of a trailing shoe applicator).

Potash is the hardest element to maintain in silage ground. If potash supply is limiting it will reduce yields by reducing the uptake and utilisation of nitrogen. It will also reduce the protein in your silage. Potash requirement matches nitrogen requirement in units/acre. E.g., First cut silage needs 90-100 units N and 100 units of K. Care should be taken to avoid applications over 70-75 units/acre in 1 application. If higher amounts of K are needed, it should be applied to the after-grass (See table below) in a little and often approach or 1 bag of potash (50 units) per acre can be applied in the autumn.

Spring Treatment for First Cut Silage		Potash (K) Required After Silage		
	Rate Per Acre	Index 1	Index 2	Index 3
No Slurry	3.5 bags of 15-3-20+S and 1.5 bags of SUL CAN	100 units	75 units	30 units
Jan/early Feb application of slurry	4.5 bags of 21-2.2.10+S	70 units	45 units	0 units
Later application of slurry	4.25 bags of 22-2.5-5+S	95 units	70 units	25 units

Note: Good thick Slurry at an application rate 2000 gallons/acre will give 55-60 units of K, but K value can change significantly depending on slurry. Any offtakes from subsequent cuts will have to be added to these requirements. Beware high applications of K will increase the risk of grass tetany.

Bulk Spreading - Reap the Rewards

By Conor Condron - (B.Agr.Sc) – Ph: 086 1453416

It is that time of year again when fertiliser spreading becomes a topic of conversation. Spring is a busy time on all farms and labour shortages can lead to an 'all hands-on deck' approach for several weeks. One question I would like you to ask yourself while reading this article is: Does it make economic sense to spread my own fertiliser?

Consider the following points:

- Value of your own time.
- Labour shortages during busy springtime.
- Wear and tear of farm machinery.
- Second machine needed to load the fertiliser.
- Diesel costs.
- Cost of fertiliser spreader.
- Accuracy of fertiliser spreading

Accuracy of fertiliser spreading can be a major issue when GPS systems are not used. Teagasc have estimated up to €32/acre in losses (lodged crops/ reduced yield) due to inaccurate spreading. All of J Grennan & Sons bulk spreading fleet are equipped with the most modern and efficient GPS systems.

Features within the GPS system include:

- Autosteer technology.
- Automatic section control.
- Minimal overlapping.
- Exact spread patterns right up to (but not including) field boundaries. Custom blended fertilisers are available.
- Delivers the exact amount of N, P, K your soil requires so, no excess fertiliser applied – saving you money and helping the environment.
- Full nutrient advice and soil testing service provided.

Contact our Technical Sales Team for more info.