



Fertiliser – Who Has Got The Crystal Ball?

Our thoughts on what is happening in fertiliser markets.

You are all well aware that fertiliser prices have not just gone up but have multiplied by a factor of 2 to 4 in recent times. There are several reasons behind this unprecedented jump in price - to name a few: Gas prices have skyrocketed, fertiliser factories have shut down, freight rates have jumped by up to four times previous rates, the Euro has weakened against the Dollar, sanctions have been imposed on Belarusian potash exports, and China, Russia and Turkey have banned or curbed fertiliser exports to reduce their domestic prices.

Whatever the reasons, “we are where we are” and it’s what happens next, and what we do about it now, that matters most.

The things we **ALL** need to consider now are:

1. Some fertiliser prices are at all-time highs and are continuing to rise, all be it at a slower pace in recent weeks.
2. Gas is the main energy source used in the production of fertilisers, particularly high N’s, so the price of gas has a huge bearing on fertiliser prices. Forward prices on gas show no signs of weakness until April - at that point they are quoted at about half current levels.
3. This doesn’t mean that Nitrogen prices will halve in April. We say this for two reasons:
 - a. There is at least a 6-8 week time lag between getting gas into the factories to manufacture product, and getting fertiliser to Ireland.
 - b. Gas, though a major part, is only one part of the product cost.
4. No one, that we are aware of, saw this coming and the fact that we can see no respite from these prices before next Summer doesn’t guarantee that they will not drop in the meantime.
5. Product availability is looking increasingly likely to become an issue, despite the significant reduction in demand expected because of the current price level. Already, some products are being rationed or are not available. The reasons being:
 - a. Credit limits on importers and international fertiliser traders mean they can now only accommodate about one third of the volume they would have handled last year. From both a risk and cash flow point of view, everyone in the supply chain needs to sell and get paid for what they have sold, to allow them to buy more. The less purchasing done now, the more risk of product shortages next spring.

- b. Market participants will want to reduce their exposure to the expected price drop next summer or any earlier unexpected price drop. No one wants to be “left holding the baby” so they will be keeping stocks tight.
- c. The aforementioned Belarusian, Russian Chinese and Turkish export curbs and factory closures in Europe mean that trade is already reduced and likely to continue to run at a much-reduced level. This is likely to leave the market short of product when it is most needed for application. It is important to remember the two months lead time mentioned above - It can be difficult to service the ‘Spring rush’ even in a normal year.
- d. It is becoming increasingly difficult to access freight ships.

Your options:

1. Test your soil or refer to recent results to get your soil pH right and avoid overuse of fertiliser. We can help you with this, but please talk to us sooner rather than later.
2. Do nothing and hope for the best next Spring.
3. Buy and pay for some product now and hope for the best with the balance of next Spring’s requirements.
4. Buy all next Spring’s requirement now, if you can get it.
5. Consider using the new Terra range of high N fertilisers from Target. They offer considerable scope for increasing Nitrogen use efficiency and reducing your overall cost.

We have painted the picture as we see it, in order to help keep you informed as best we can. Others may take a different view and we are not saying we are right, but we are being honest in our assessment of the situation. Neither do we offer advice to anyone to buy or not. It is up to everyone to inform themselves and make their own decision.

While we can offer no guarantees, we assure you we will be doing our very best to have as full a range of products available to you at as competitive a price as possible.

CHRISTMAS ORDERS

Please ensure you order sufficient product to see you through the busy Christmas period and into the New Year as there will be a restricted delivery service over the Christmas period. Thank you.

Ewe & Lamb Diets

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

Another season arrives, but our belief and approach to formulating ewe and lamb diets remains the same – Quality is first and foremost every time. Ingredient costs must take a back seat especially when it comes to the pregnant or lactating ewe. We believe ewes should always be fed high quality feed, which will enhance their overall energy and nutrient intake, rather than simply act as a substitute for forage. Sheep do not give you a second chance to get it right, so when you buy a Nugget sheep feedstuff, you can be assured that you have made the right choice, first time.

Tommy Claffey from Ballinagore, Kilbeggan, Co Westmeath farms a mixed grazing enterprise consisting of 140 early lambing ewes and 50 suckler cows.

“We are early season lamb producers, and we aim to produce high quality lambs for the Easter market. The ewe flock is predominately Suffolk cross with a few Texel crosses also included. These ewes are mated to Texel rams in August to produce lambs that will thrive from birth to slaughter and grade U’s. The system is quite simple really. Ewes are scanned in late October and housed in December where they are batched into groups of singles, twins and triplets and fed appropriately”

Tommy says “as we all have off farm employment it is very important that lambing runs as smoothly as possible.

We need ewes to lamb with good sized, healthy, hardy lambs and they need to have plenty of milk. As an early lamb producer, milk is absolutely vital when you need a lamb to hit 42-45kg in 12-13 weeks. We find that the ingredients in Grennan’s Elite Ewe & Lamb 20% nut always delivers on this front, and we would also be very happy with the birth weights and vigor of our lambs. We have been using Grennan’s Elite Ewe & Lamb 20% nut for the past five or six years now and we certainly can’t see ourselves moving away from it anytime soon”



Dry Cow Mastitis Prevention

By Shane Gonoude – B.Agr.Sc, M.Agr.Sc – Ph: 086 646 6707

The dry period is of great importance when it comes to overall health and productivity for the cow in the next lactation. The ultimate goal of the dry cow period is to have as few quarters infected with bacteria as possible come calving time. Achieving this goes a long way towards maximising production and achieving low somatic cell counts during the next lactation.

The majority of all new intramammary infections in the dry period are acquired in the last 2-3 weeks pre calving. These infections are not noticeable during the dry period but cause clinical mastitis early in the next lactation.

To prevent new infections in the dry period, it is important to minimise the infection load from the environment, and to build the cow's defense system. This can be achieved by keeping the bedding area for the cows clean and dry. Cows lie down for 12-14 hours a day, and their teats are in direct contact with the material where they rest.

Populations of bacteria in bedding are related to the number of bacteria on teat ends and rates of infection. High calcium limestone powders inhibit the pathogenic bacteria present in cubicles and can aid the prevention of environmental mastitis. A blend of cubicle lime and hydrated lime is the recommended solution to aid in both the reduction of environmental mastitis and the lowering of the somatic cell count in your milk.

MasterCAL is a standalone ready-blended solution that uniquely balances the bacteria-fighting properties of

hydrated lime with the usability and comfort of regular cubicle lime. MasterCal is available from all Grennan's stores in 1 tonne and 20kg bags.

Nutrition has a vital role to play. **Dry matter intake, energy and mineral balance during the dry period have long-term implications for your battle against clinical mastitis throughout the entire lactation.**

Innovative feed ingredients such as **Aromabiotic**, help to increase the activity of neutrophils. These are short the lived white blood cells which help reduce SCC and overall inflammation in the cow, leading to more productive, healthier animals. Aromabiotic is included in our **Immuno Pre-Calver Mineral** and **Immuno Pre-Calver Nut**. It is also available as a standalone **Immuno Farm Pak**. All can be fed from 8 weeks pre-calving but are particularly useful when fed in the last 4 weeks pre-calving.

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Planning for Next Spring

By Aisling Claffey - B.Agr.Sc., Ph.D. – Ph: 086 031 7483

December is the perfect opportunity to reflect on a busy 12 months of farming. It is a time to reflect on what has been achieved and is also a great time to consider things that could have been done better. Preparations can be made over the next 6-8 weeks so you can hit the ground running again next spring!

Calf health and facilities:

Set up your routine for managing colostrum to ensure the best start for your calves! 1) Collect ample containers for refrigeration and freezing; 2) Have a refractometer to test quality; 3) Have a single mobile milking unit - it is a convenient way to collect colostrum after calving and helps to avoid dilution of antibodies.

Are pens washed and disinfected in preparation for next year's calves? Can you adapt your shed to reduce labour or physical workload when moving calves or carrying buckets of milk/milk replacer/straw/feed etc.

Have you a prep area with access to hot and cold water, and a medicine cabinet with basic calf remedies (electrolytes, pain relief, anti-inflammatories, anti-biotics where necessary, thermometer etc) to hand?

If disease outbreaks occurred last year, consider changes that can be made to reduce infection pressures; to minimise scours, vaccinate cows 3-12 weeks pre-calving with Rotovac; identify draughts and ventilation issues to minimise pneumonia challenge; discuss herd health program with your vet!

Replacement heifers:

Weigh heifers now if you haven't already done so, lighter stock need to make up ground if they are behind target. Supplement these lighter stock with 2-3 kg of **High Energy Beef**

16% or Heifer Developer 18% Nuts if on low protein silage.

Vaccinations and herd health program:

The dry cow period is an ideal time to provide many routine vaccinations as stock are housed and under little stress. Vaccinating at this time improves vaccine efficiency compared to vaccinating in early lactation. Lepto and BVD should be carried out 4 weeks pre-breeding (8 weeks before for heifers, to allow for booster).

Many of you will have opted to try selective dry cow therapy. Cubicle hygiene and maintaining clean calving sheds is essential, particularly in the first 21 days after drying off and as cows start springing!

There should be a big focus on cow BCS, silage mineral content, dry cow minerals etc to minimise the risk of milk fever and metabolic issues during the transition period. During the dry period, use only high quality pre-calver minerals such as **Grennan's Elite Pre-Calver**, or better still, **Grennan's Immuno Pre-Calver**. Go a step further and complete an entire dry cow feeding program with the help of any of our nutritionists - it will really pay dividends for you.

Compile standard operating procedures for using certain equipment such as the parlour wash routine, colostrum mgmt. or to deal with health issues (mastitis, metritis, scour, pneumonia), particularly if you have someone unfamiliar with your farm working with you this spring!

Look after number one!

It has been a long and busy year for all. Use this quiet time to get a rest and perhaps an MOT, as looking after your own health is key to managing the busy spring.

Season's Greetings

As we come to the end of another year, on behalf of my family and work colleagues, I would like to thank you for your most valued business and support throughout a difficult 2021. It's very important for all of us in Grennans to remember that our business is only as good as the support we receive from you, our very valued customer.

We look forward to your continued, valued support throughout 2022 as we make our best efforts to provide you with a continuously improving service. If you have any thoughts or suggestions on how we can improve our service to you in the future, contact any staff member or email - suggestions@grennans.ie.

On behalf of all at Grennans we wish you and your family a most enjoyable Christmas and a happy, healthy & prosperous 2022.

Best wishes and thanks again for your support.

John Grennan