

“Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with all the brave people of Ukraine at this horrific time”

Newsletter JUNE

**GRENNAN**
& SONS

2022

Managing Grass to Maximise Milk Solids

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

Strong growth rates (80 kg DM/ha+) from early May have made grass hard to manage in recent weeks with pre-grazing covers in excess of 1700 kg DM/ha typically reported on PastureBase. This rapid growth lends itself to increased stem at the base of the sward. Our Grass Watch* monitor farms showed an increase in NDF levels from 37% in late April (just sufficient to meet the cow's requirement for fibre) to 44% in mid-May. This stem can not only reduce sward quality but also act as a barrier to grazing, inhibiting the cows from maintaining residuals, which will reduce quality in the subsequent rotation. Grazing heavier covers will also suppress dry matter intake, as the fibrous components of the plant will take longer to breakdown vs the leaf proportion which is higher in sugars and more digestible!

Where pre-mowing is being considered as an option for corrective action, it is important that it is done only in swards of optimum pre-grazing covers i.e. 13-1500 kg DM/ha. The grass cover around the dung pads in these paddocks will be in the range of 17-2000 kg DM/ha. If average pre-grazing covers are in excess of this, pre-mowing will force the cows to eat significant proportions of indigestible material, impacting on both milk yield and milk protein.

Another observation made from our weekly Grass Watch reports is the effect of skipping a round of nitrogen on the protein content of grass. Despite swards looking leafy and green, samples are coming back as low as 13% CP in recent weeks. Smaller applications of 15-20 u/ac every round are better than larger N applications every second round. This is also true for grass/clover swards where there is even more potential to reduce N applications, particularly where clover proportions of 25%+ are observed. At that level of clover, applications of 7-10 u/ac in each round are recommended to maintain grass quality.



Would you like to get weekly updates from our Grass Watch programme?

*The Grennans Grass Watch Programme analyses grass samples from typical rotational grazing systems at both a local and national level on a weekly basis. It gives us highly valuable, up-to-date information on typical paddock grass quality, protein content, predicted dairy cow intakes and enables us to provide accurate concentrate supplementation advice based on that data.

This service is available to all our feed customers.

Text your name to 0860828920 to receive weekly updates.

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Easi Cobs - for Easy Feeding at Grass

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

Grennans **Easi Beef Cobs** offer a new way forward for supplementing beef at grass. Cobs are simply a larger diameter (c. 16mm) nuts that can be thrown out directly on the ground in grazing situations, with minimal risk of wastage. Cobs allow for ease of feeding without the added work and dangers of moving troughs and being too close to large livestock, all the while avoiding poaching of fields.

Cobs are particularly useful in rotational grazing systems for dry stock. If you are moving cattle between paddocks every 4-5 days, moving feed troughs becomes laborious. While we understand that you may be hesitant to throw expensive feed on the grass, our experience has shown that cobs work very well in this situation, with minimal waste.

It makes more and more sense to finish cattle younger, both from a profit and environmental perspective, and the key to finishing early is supplementary feeding used in conjunction with rotational grazing systems. Easi Beef Cobs are well worth trying.

Grennans Easi Beef Cobs:

- Ideal feedstuff for beef cattle over 6 months.
- Can be fed directly onto pasture with no waste due to their large size.
- Highly convenient – no troughs required.
- Can be fed under strip wires, so you do not have to run the risk of getting knocked down by feeding animals.
- Can be fed using ‘a snacker’.
- Available in 25kg bags.



Kale - Well Worth Considering

By **Tim Guinan** - (B. Ag. Sc.) – Ph: 0872573368

Due to the milder, wetter summers we experience here in Ireland, we have an almost uniquely suitable climate for growing brassica crops vs our UK and European neighbours, so it is not surprising that we are seeing a steady increase in forage brassicas being sown in recent years. With the cost of concentrate feeds and making grass silage only going in one direction in recent times, there is considerable scope for a much greater uptake of these crops, be it Kale sown in May / June, Redstart in June/July or Forage Rape sown in July / August.

Brassicas have the potential to deliver large volumes of highly nutritious dry matter for beef and dairy cattle, and sheep – however that potential will only be realised when due care and attention is paid to them, particularly around sowing time, seed rate, soil fertility and seed bed preparation.

Of the three crops, Kale, has the greatest potential to deliver high yields of low-cost, high-quality feed next winter. We have seen crops deliver over 12t DM /ha.

Sowing date and rate are critical for Kale, aim to sow in the first half of June. You can sow later, but like all crops, yield potential

will be dropping as you sow later. The most popular variety is Maris Kestral, because of its short stem, leafiness, and good winter hardiness.

Aim to sow Kale at 0.5 to 2kg per acre depending on sowing method and seed bed conditions. The seedbed must be well cultivated with a fine firm finish, and it is absolutely vital that you do not allow the seedbed to dry out during cultivations. A pass of a heavy roller immediately after each cultivation pass is recommended, particularly if sowing in warm dry weather. If you manage to retain adequate moisture in the top of the seedbed, we suggest sowing at the lower seed rates with a properly calibrated drill. The retained soil moisture will ensure a quick, even germination of the kale seeds and this delivers obvious benefits in terms of subsequent yield etc. You also get the added benefit of weed control not being an issue when you achieve quick germination of all seeds.

The optimum pH for kale is 6.5 to 6.8 and fertiliser usage will depend on the nutrient status of your soil, but usually it will take 100 units of N split between sowing and when crop has achieved full ground cover. 20 to 30 units of P and 80 to 100 units of K per acre would be standard for Index 2 to 3 soils.



Reducing Parasite Challenges of Nematodirus

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

Nematodirus worms affect lambs aged 5 - 12 weeks of age who become infected through ingesting large numbers of infective larvae present on contaminated grass. There is a mass hatching of larvae in springtime when soil temperatures increase after a period of cold weather. Lambs will begin to show clinical signs of infection 2 - 3 weeks from the date of peak hatching.

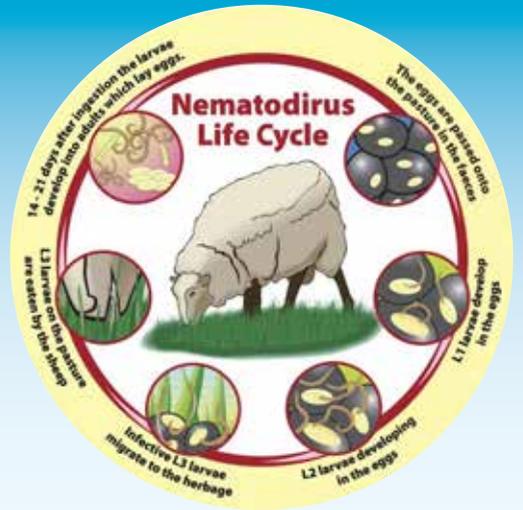
Before they can hatch, the eggs have to undergo a period of cold weather followed by warmer temperatures of 10°C or more.

Because this disease strikes so quickly and the damage is done by large numbers of immature larvae that are not producing eggs, we cannot afford to have a 'wait and see' policy with Nematodirus. Farmers must act on the basis of risk assessment and advice on the level of challenge in their area.

Treatment

- If you feel your lambs are at risk or notice obvious clinical signs, such as sudden scouring, you need to use a white drench/Benzimidazole. These drenches are effective against both larval and adult stages.
- In addition, carry out a faecal egg count 7 - 10 days after the lambs are treated. This will identify if anthelmintic resistance is a problem on your farm.
- Currently there are no drenches with effective residual activity against Nematodirus which means that as the lamb continues to graze it can become re-infected with larvae again, but lambs tend to develop resistance to Nematodirus from about twelve weeks of age onwards.

NEMATODIRUS HOST STAGE - 14 DAYS



New Look Feed Bags on the Way

We are delighted to announce to the launch of our new look feed bags. The first of these will be going into production in the next few weeks, and we plan to roll out this change across our entire bagged feed range over the next 6-8 months. Please be assured that while the packaging is changing, the products themselves remain unchanged. The new design features fully recyclable plastic and full colour images with pre-printed QR code and barcode. Comprehensive product information will be behind every QR code and barcoding will enable more efficient stock control etc.



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Molybdenum Toxicity in Calves

By Joe Naughton – (B.Agr.Sc) - Ph: 086 145 2586

Molybdenum (Mo) is a mineral found at varying levels in soils and plays little or no beneficial role in either grass growth or animal performance. However, when we hear about copper (Cu) deficiency, the actual problem is often a combination of Cu deficiency and Mo toxicity. This is because excess Mo in grass acts as an antagonist which stops Cu absorption in the animal, particularly young animals. Unfortunately, 40-50% of Irish soils are inherently high in Mo and these high levels are compounded by high soil pH, high organic matter content and poorly aerated, cold and wet soil conditions - typically worse in spring time.

In the case of calves, they will suffer with a bad diarrhoea within 10 days of turnout and ill thrift will be common throughout the 1st grazing season. Over the first 2 months at grass, a red tinge can occur on their coats which has traditionally been associated with Cu deficiency. Where calves are brought back indoors on hay/silage and meal, conditions generally improve straight away. Weaned dairy calves seem to be the most susceptible to Mo toxicity, where high levels of nitrogen and good grassland management are practiced.

LONG TERM MANAGEMENT

The best form of management is to identify high risk paddocks by carrying out grass mineral analysis in April-June and try to avoid calves grazing these paddocks. Use high Mo paddocks for silage because ensiling reduces Mo availability. In general, improving soil drainage and aeration will improve soil health and also reduce Mo availability. If you have a history of Cu/Mo issues, be careful around liming. Bring soils up to pH 6.2 and then monitor grass Mo levels closely for a year or two before deciding if you can bring it up to the ideal pH 6.5-7. We have helped numerous farms to strike the right balance in this regard, so don't hesitate to contact us.

SHORT TERM CONTROL

Aside from the above, you have little option but to supplement with copper.

GRENNANS 4-WAY COPPER BUCKETS

- supply the maximum permitted levels of copper in 4 different forms to cater for the multitude of different soil type/plant nutrient/animal interactions that can arise on Irish farms.
- contain 40% protected copper and all the essential mineral and vitamins.

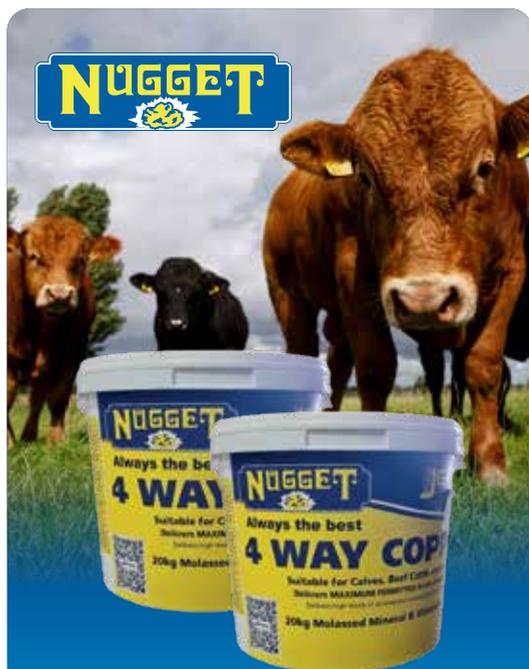
- are ideal for calves, weanlings, beef cattle and cows grazing high Mo, high pH, low Cu and peaty soils.

GRENNANS EARLY GRAZE CALF NUTS

- are ideal at grass where (Mo) toxicity is an issue, as they contain maximum permitted levels of copper.
- should be fed at 2kgs per head per day as they are designed specifically to help prevent acidosis and enable the calf to make the best use of a grass-based diet.
- are low in starch and high in fibre, contain a high spec mineral and vitamin pack.
- contain extra rumen buffers to help prevent acidosis.

BOLUSES

- Cosicure or Allsure are also available in all our branches
- It is important to note, for Cu to be effective in a Mo toxicity situation it needs to be available within the rumen - that is why a lot of Cu boluses, injections and drenches are ineffective with the exception of the Cosicure bolus.



Call us today on 057-9133002