

# Newsletter MARCH 2023

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## FERTILISER REQUIREMENTS FOR 1ST CUT SILAGE

By Aaron Kealy – (B. Agr. Sc.) – 086 1999148

Grass silage has a large nutrient demand and adequate N, P & K is essential for maximising grass yield and producing sufficient winter feed. **Nitrogen (N)** is the key driver of grass yield. Grass swards with high levels of perennial ryegrass will use N more efficiently than older swards. A crop of grass silage (5 t DM/ha) needs 100 kg N/ha (80 units/ac). Grass silage takes up, on average, 2.5 kg/ha/day of N (two units/day), therefore apply N at least 50 days before cutting to ensure full N utilisation.

**For Phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) applications, farmers should** consult their most recent soil test reports to determine the P and K requirements for silage fields. A crop of grass silage will remove approximately 4 kg P and 25 kg K/tonne of grass DM. K applications should be limited to a maximum of 90 kg K/ha from now on because luxury amounts of K may be taken up by grass where more than 90 kg/ha K is applied. This can reduce fertiliser K efficiency and may upset the K: Mg: Na balance in herbage. Where more than 90 kg/ha is advised, it should be applied in the autumn/winter months.

**Timing of N, P & K application** - Apply N, P & K requirements when closing silage fields in early April. Where cattle slurry is applied, delay the top-up fertiliser applications for one week.

**Sulphur** deficiency is most likely on light, sandy or free-draining soils with low soil organic matter. Grass silage crops require 20 kg S/ha per cut. Applying S to soils where it is required will improve grass DM yields and quality, as it helps to maintain an optimum N:S ratio and N, will be used more efficiently.

So, delivering the appropriate N, P, K and Sulphur levels to silage ground can be quite complex. We have a range of Target fertiliser blends ready-made to suit the majority of on-farm situations. We can also custom blend bulk fertiliser to suit more complex requirements.



### Hit your Targets with TERRA

- Reduce your N applications by up to 25%
- Improve your N-Use Efficiency
- Proven Results on Irish grass trials
- Available as:
  - TerraCAN + S
  - TerraCUT + S



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# SPRING DAIRY RANGE – WHY?

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

February has proved a reasonably kind month in most parts of the country allowing the opportunity for cows to get out to grass by day on many farms and promote higher energy intakes in early lactation!

March could provide a taste of all the seasons, so it is important to keep the energy density of the diet correct as the cow is still under pressure for energy balance as milk yield stays on the rise over the coming weeks and increases in dry matter intake lag behind!

We are all too aware of the forecasted changes to milk price so it has never been more important to protect our

milk solids and ensure we achieve the best possible price we can for our milk! Falling protein values are natural after calving but it is important to realise what is a 'natural dip' and what is the result of an energy deficit!

Milk protein can typically decline by approx. 0.3% in early lactation and increase steadily after the cow passes her peak milk yield! Understanding your own herd's genetic potential for milk protein will help you determine if your milk protein is on target for your herd!

	Prot % PTA	EBI Base Cow Prot %	Predicted Protein %	Fat % PTA	EBI Base Cow Fat %	Predicted Fat %
Herd avg.	0.06	3.39 %	3.6 %	0.09	3.90 %	4.22
5th lact +	0.02	3.39 %	3.46 %	0.01	3.90 %	3.94
2021 calves	0.11	3.39 %	3.78 %	0.16	3.90 %	4.46

Energy density is critical to achieving optimum milk protein and yield in early lactation! Maintaining a daily allocation of grass will help, because typically, spring grass ranges from 1.0-1.1 UFL/kg DM compared to grass and maize silages typically ranging from 0.8-0.85 UFL/kg DM! It's also critical to ensure cows are being fed a high-quality dairy nut that matches their protein requirements, such as Mega Milk 16, because forage intake in particular, will be limited in early lactation!

## STUDY THIS TABLE!

	Concentrate A	Concentrate B
UFL (per kg conc as fed)	1.08	0.95
Cost (€/ton as fed)	€470	€450
Litres delivered/kg as fed <sup>1</sup>	2.4	2.1
Cost feed €/kg as fed	€0.47	€0.45
Value of milk (@40c/l) delivered/kg conc. fed	€0.96	€0.84
Return on Investment/kg fed <sup>2</sup>	€0.49	€0.39
Saving/100 cow herd fed 5 kg/day	€50/day for paying €20 extra/ton	

RATH  
057 91 33002

KILCORMAC  
057 91 35004

TINNYCROSS  
057 93 25500

MOATE  
090 64 66526

ROSEMOUNT  
090 64 36358

MOYVORE  
044 93 55593

# THE IMPORTANCE OF COW REHYDRATION POST CALVING

By *Shane Gonoude* – (B. Agr. Sc., M. Agr. Sc.) – 087 6466707

Calving is an extremely stressful time for the cow. Hormonal, dietary and environmental changes mean that cows are exposed to much more stress than usual, in and around calving. In the build-up directly before calving, a cow's appetite and ability to take in fluids is greatly suppressed. Therefore, correct cow rehydration immediately post-calving can be a massive help to her in supporting quick recovery and helping her get back on her feet.

Limited fluid intake pre-calving combined with the inevitable loss of fluid incurred during calving, exposes the cow to greater risk of post-calving problems. The suppressed DMI is also a major factor in the incidence of early lactation metabolic diseases such as displaced abomasum, retained placenta, milk fever and ketosis.

Farm-O-San Reviva has been specifically developed by one of the leading bovine nutrition companies in Europe to address the rehydration and appetite stimulation issues outlined above. It is a highly palatable post-calving drink for dairy cows, with large amounts of Electrolytes, Energy, Calcium and Trace Minerals.

We have been stocking Reviva in all of our branches for several years. In that time, we have seen many farmers trying just one bucket to give a favourite cow a boost after calving. Invariably those same farmers come back for many more buckets and some farmers end up giving it to almost every cow in the herd, such are the results that they see.

Best energy drink available and one that cows love to drink!

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## SPRING CROPPING 2023

By *Paul Mooney* – (B. Agr. Sc.) – 086 6466707

While grain prices have softened considerably since last harvest, the current expectations are that fertilizer prices will continue to follow suit. So, while there are no guarantees on either front, the outlook for harvest 2023 does look reasonably ok. Agrochemical prices are also rising a bit, but overall payback should not change too much because we are always getting newer and better chemistry.

There are a number of tillage schemes in 2023 where DAFM funding can be sought. These schemes are designed to help the sector so should not be ignored.

- **Straw Incorporation:** €250/ha for chopping straw. Huge benefit to soil and in areas where straw values are very low.
- **Protein subsidy:** €500/ha subsidy for protein crops. Beans look set to deliver the best margin in 2023. The lower input costs and rotational benefits are of huge benefit.
- **Tillage Incentive:** €400/ha for converting grassland into tillage and €200/ha for land that was transferred into tillage in 2022.

Due to a drop in the winter cereal area sown in the back end, spring seed supplies could get tight. Therefore, you should order your seed asap and try to do so in 500kg bags rather than 50kg bags, insofar as possible.

There is still time to sow beans. Up to the end of March would be considered ok. For those sowing for the first time, beware of the pitfalls! You need to watch out for bird attacks after sowing. Pre-emergence herbicide is the only form of weed control so that must be put on within 5 days after sowing. If possible, roll before applying the herbicide, but never afterwards because this will break the residual chemical "seal" on the soil surface.

Geraldine, Planet, Errigal & Amity are the main spring barley varieties available. These are all top-yielding varieties with good disease resistance and grain quality traits. Good soil conditions at sowing time are absolutely essential if you are to get the best out of your barley crop. So, while March 15th would be the ideal sowing date, ground conditions rather than date, should be the key decision maker when it comes to sowing.



# HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF WONDERLAMB

By Damien Conboy - (B. Agr. Sc.) - 087 2124036

**WONDER LAMB** is a high-quality milk replacer, formulated to deliver high liveweight gain and excellent health status in lambs and kid goats. It is suitable for bottle feeding, automatic feeding systems and ad-lib feeding. Wonder Lamb contains a health package to boost the overall immune system of young lambs/kid goats and improve feed conversion efficiency (FCR) by reducing the incidence of diarrhoea and respiratory disease.

## MIXING & FEEDING INSTRUCTIONS:

- Mixing rates: add 160-180g of Wonder Lamb milk replacer to 800ml water to make 1 litre (16-18% concentration).
- Mixing temperature should be 42°C.
- Feeding temperature should be 38-40°C, however in an ad-lib feeding system, as lambs get older, it is advisable to gradually reduce the temperature of milk down to 20-22°C as lambs come closer to weaning.

## WEANING MANAGEMENT:

- Abrupt weaning is the best system for weaning lambs and will reduce the risk of digestive upsets.
- Weaning can also be successfully achieved by reducing the milk given when the lamb is 6-8 weeks old.
- As a guide, for successful weaning lambs should be approximately 10-12kg or 2.5 times birth weight and be consuming >250g/day of concentrate for at least 2-3 days.
- Lambs need to be a minimum of 35 days old at weaning to avoid a growth check

*Note: This information is intended as a guide only. Offer fresh concentrate ad-lib, freshwater ad-lib, and fresh bedding daily. Good feeding management, good animal husbandry and good hygiene are always essential.*

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## Wonder Lamb MILK REPLACER



Improved Health | Better Weight Gains | Maximum Returns



Delivers high liveweight gain and excellent health status in lambs and kid goats. Suitable for bottle, automatic systems and ad-lib feeding. Contains a health package to boost overall immunity and improve feed conversion efficiency (FCR) by reducing the incidence of diarrhoea and respiratory disease.