Newsletter APRIL 2023

GRENNAN & SONS

A CHANGE OF TUNE AS WE GET READY FOR THE BREEDING SEASON AGAIN!

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

As the last of the cows are calving, our attention is quickly turning to the breeding season again! We have a short window now to make changes that will ensure it is successful.

Cow BCS is a critical factor, targeting a herd average of 3.0. All cows below a BCS of 2.75 should be placed on Once a Day (OAD) milking, to improve their condition until they come in heat.

Tackle signs of lameness now – addressing cows with mild bruising and discomfort in early lactation could minimise ulcers observed in later lactation and a rapid decline in BCS in these cows also.

Pre-breeding heat detection and pre-scanning will help identify and correct non-cycling cows in advance of the breeding season, thereby increasing their chances of being retained.

Maintain cows on a rising plain of nutrition. This can be a challenge when second-round grass growth is slow. It is also important to identify and tackle mineral deficiencies now! A top-quality mineral pack should include high levels of Bioplex minerals.

Mineral screening of the bulk tank can be a good way to identify deficiencies within the herd as blood plasma often accounts for circulating minerals that are not actually available to the cow. A particular example of this is Copper which may be locked up by Thiomolybdate compounds before being excreted by the cow. Where there are indications of copper deficiency both in dairy cows and youngstock, we would strongly encourage farmers to take samples from varying locations on the farm of second rotation grass at pre-grazing covers for mineral screening also. While the trace element profile of grass is naturally low, it can be helpful in identifying the antagonistic challenge presented by both Molybdenum and Sulphur on farm, particularly on heavier clay soils where Sulphur is not as readily leached over the winter months. Typically, Copper absorption efficiency is estimated to be approx. 5% by the latest NASEM guidelines, but in high Molybdenum/Sulphur swards the antagonistic challenge can result in this being as low as 1-2%. Contact your local Grennan's Rep or branch if you are interested in sending milk and/or herbage samples for analysis from your farm!

GRENNAN'S GRASS WATCH PROGRAMME

We would strongly encourage all our dairy farming customers to get involved in our Grennan's Grass Watch Programme for the remainder of the grazing season. We run this in conjunction with Trouw Nutrition and it involves analysing grass samples from a cohort of farmers across our catchment area on a weekly basis. We also collect the weekly production and dietary data from those farms. This information provides our wider customer base with localised, real-time data on grass quality and other important parameters. This information will help you (and us) to make more informed decisions when it comes to managing your cow's diet at this crucial time of year.

Under the Nitrates program all farmers, over 130kg/ha stocking rate, will be limited to using a crude protein of 15% or less in their dairy concentrate feed from April 15th. Our Grass Watch Programme should be a major help in matching concentrate feeds to grass quality whilst keeping everyone compliant.

To sign up for the Grass Watch Programme save the following number to your phone: 086 082 8920 and text Grass and your name to receive weekly updates! If you are concerned about changing to a lower protein concentrate feed at this time, please feel free to contact me on 086 031 7483 to discuss your own herd's requirements in more detail!

THE IMPORTANCE OF STARCH IN CALF DIETS

By Joe Naughton - (B. Agr. Sc.) – 086 1452586

Starch has a very important role in calf diets, particularly if one of the main aims of your calf-rearing system, is to get calves off milk and onto solid feed as early as possible (at 8-10 Weeks of Age).

For this to happen, the calves' rumen needs to develop over the first 6-8 weeks, and this is best achieved if the calf is consuming high quantities of a high-starch calf starter concentrate.

The pictures below from Penn State University show that calves at 6 weeks of age that are fed milk + a high-starch concentrate, have by far, the most developed rumen.

The dark papillae in Picture C will allow for much better solid feed utilisation. This is the goal.

The only way to achieve it is by ensuring high intakes of a correctly balanced, high-starch concentrate during the early milk feeding weeks.

The real trick is to achieve high intakes without causing digestive upsets, and this is where tried and tested, well-balanced calf concentrates such as our **Cooked Calf Crunches**, or **Super Grow Calf Nut** can make a huge difference.

Keep the following in mind:

- Offer water from 3 days of age as it helps increase calf weight gain, promotes meal intake and reduces the incidence of scour.
- Offer fresh calf starter concentrates from 3 days of age.
- Offer straw to calves from the 1st week in feeders.
- Also, keep in mind that the ideal concentrate-to-straw ratio is 8:1 to avoid the development of "pot belly" in calves and this will optimise rumen muscle tone.

NEW GRASS SEED PACKAGE FOR 2023

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

As you may know, we've been stocking mostly the Acorn brand of grass seeds for many years. These Acorn mixes excelled in terms of overall yield, and growth at the shoulders of the season. This is particularly true for the Aber Perennial Ryegrass varieties that were a major component of the Acorn brand. However, in recent years, the value of high utilisation/ high graze-out varieties has come to the fore, and we found that our loyalty to the Acorn brand was starting to restrict our ability to combine the best-yielding varieties with the best graze-out varieties.

So, we have made the decision to move away from the Acorn Grass seed brand and gradually build up our own J Grennan & Sons Grass Seed brand. We will be using our own unique blend of varieties, packed in our own bags (asap) under our own logo etc. This will give us the freedom to select the very best varieties from multiple suppliers if needs be. The aim is to establish the J Grennan & Sons Grass seed brand as the very best in the country.

THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE RANGE THAT WILL BE AVAILABLE:

1. Grennan's Sweet Graze - Will combine the very best varieties, to deliver a very high-yielding, super utilisation Grazing sward. This is designed to replace the very popular Acorn Sweet Tooth.

2. Grennan's Hi Digestibility Mix – This blend will major on high graze-outs/high utilisation varieties, so will be designed to deliver extremely palatable, high-sugar grazing swards.

3. Grennan's Cut 'n' Graze - This will be our general-purpose mix designed to deliver early grazing, followed by a slightly later first cut of silage, and grazing or silage thereafter. This will be filling the slot that Acorn Gold Tooth used to.

4. Grennan's Heavy/Peaty Soil Mix – Is designed to deliver very persistent, poaching-resistant swards in difficult soils.

5. Grennan's Specialised Silage Mixes – contain varieties that do best under continuous cutting situations. Red or white clover or zero clover will be an option. These will be stocked to order only.

Remember, why you should reseed regularly:

- Cost recovered in 2 years.
- 8% more milk production
- 15-20% more productive swards
- 25% more response to applied nitrogen.
- Better spring and autumn growth equals extended grazing season.

GUIDE TO INCREASING NITROGEN USE EFFICIENCY IN GRASSLAND

By Brian Delaney – (B. Agr. Sc.) – 086 0449592

It is more important than ever that we focus on maximising Nitrogen (N) use efficiency on our farms, in order to enhance profitability, while also protecting and improving water quality. Utilising recent soil tests is the first step in growing more grass per unit of nitrogen applied.

- Correcting **Soil pH** has the potential to release an extra 80kg of N/ha (64 units/ac). The DAFM has also recently announced a subsidy scheme of €16 per tonne of lime spread.
- **Low soil Phosphates (P)** will restrict grass root development, resulting in less nutrient uptake.
- **Low soil Potash (K)** will also negatively affect N uptake, especially in very dry conditions.
- **Sulphur (S)** is important for increasing efficiency and converting the N in the plant to protein.
- **Low soil Zinc (Zn)** will also result in poor rooting and can reduce N metabolism in the plant by as much as 50%.
- **Magnesium (Mg)** is an integral part of chlorophyll, which is the driver of all plant growth. So, you simply cannot have optimal grass growth without sufficient Mg. It also is an important carrier of Phosphorus to the root zone of the grass sward.

The **Terra** range of high N fertilisers are also a highly effective way of growing more grass per unit of N applied. Terra contains a bio-stimulant that is proven to increase nitrogen uptake and efficiency by 20 to 25%. So, **22 units of TerraCan will deliver the same grass yield as 27 units of Sul-CAN**, at a considerable cost saving.

Please feel free to contact any of Grennan's Technical Team or your local branch if you would like to discuss your options for growing more grass on your farm.

REMINDER TO ALL CUSTOMERS

HERD NUMBERS ARE REQUIRED FOR AGRI-CHEMICAL PURCHASES

In recent years we've all seen a gradual tightening up of the regulatory requirements around the traceability of farm input purchases.

We are now legally obliged to record the name & address of everyone that buys Animal Feedstuffs & Agri-Chemical products from us.

While this is already happening by default on all credit invoices, it does mean going forward, we are obliged to have these purchaser details on ALL CASH SALE dockets also.

We are also legally obliged to record the Purchaser Herd Number every time we sell Agri-Chemical products. So going forward, if you are purchasing Agri-Chemical products from us, you can expect our shop staff to be looking for your Herd/Flock number if we don't already have it on our system. Legally speaking, we are not allowed to proceed with the sale in its absence.

GETTING PROTEIN LEVELS RIGHT IN LAMB DIETS

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

The purpose of supplementing lambs with concentrates is to provide them with a concentrated form of energy and protein, in a highly digestible form, which is fully balanced with essential vitamins and minerals. A common misconception exists where many people believe that an 18% crude protein concentrate is the best product to finish their lambs in any circumstance.

Lamb growth rates and carcass fat deposition are not determined by the level of protein intake alone, but rather by a combination of protein and energy content. Where young or pedigree lambs are being creep-fed concentrates indoors and other dietary protein sources are limited, an 18% crude protein concentrate such as **Grennan's Elite Lamb Pellets** should be offered, because these growing lambs have an additional requirement for protein.

Growing lambs (less than 35kg) creep-fed outdoors on grass should receive a diet containing 14-16% crude protein such as **Grennan's Intensive Lamb Pellets**. Lambs that are well-grown and in the finishing phase or being fed ad-lib will not benefit from dietary crude protein levels above 12-14%. Excess dietary protein is simply excreted in the urine, a process which uses up valuable energy, thereby reducing its availability for muscle growth!

Excess levels of dietary protein in lambs being fed intensively may also increase the risk of male lambs developing urinary calculi. The exact level of risk will depend on many factors. These include age, breed, forage quality, dietary protein, disease, water hardness, housing conditions, stress levels and management, to name but a few. We build Ammonium Chloride into all our Lamb Finishing diets, as an aid in the prevention of urinary calculi. Whilst highly effective in most situations, its inclusion in the diets is not a guarantee that you won't get an odd case of urinary calculi.

When selecting an appropriate concentrate feed for your lambs, always consider the energy content of the feed with a minimum UFL of 0.94 being required. By selecting a concentrate with an appropriate protein content for your circumstances, you can potentially reduce your days to slaughter and also reduce your feed costs.

Every farm will have its own unique set of lamb finishing circumstances across a range of factors, from breed to forage type to housing facilities.

Feel free to discuss your Lambs dietary protein requirements with any of the Grennan's Technical team.