

# Newsletter AUGUST 2024



## TOP 5 TIPS FOR OPTIMUM LAMB PERFORMANCE POST WEANING:

By *Damien Conboy* - (B.Agr.Sc.) – Ph:087 212 4036

**1. WORM CONTROL:** Do a Faecal egg count (FEC) to get a handle on the worm burden, choose an appropriate wormer if required, dose lambs and carry out another FEC. The timing of this post dosing FEC depends on the type of anthelmintic used – 7 days after a yellow drench, 10-14 days after a white drench and 14-16 days after a clear drench.

**FECs are available in all our branches and can be used to:**

- Help determine the need to treat.
- Test the efficacy of treatment.
- Give information on the amount of contamination going onto the pasture.

**2. GRASS QUALITY & UTILISATION:** It's important that weaned lambs are given priority access to the best quality grass cover on the farm. Target covers of 8-10cm and graze down to 5cm. Lambs should be moved once covers are grazed to within 5cm.

**3. TRACE ELEMENT SUPPLEMENTATION:** Mineral deficiencies such as Cobalt can significantly reduce lamb thrive and some farms are more susceptible to deficiencies

than others. Trace elements can be supplemented in various ways such as drenches, boluses & lick buckets. Where lambs are on a grass only diet it is advisable to supplement with minerals, whilst lambs on concentrates should not require further mineral supplementation unless there is a severe deficiency on farm.

**4. LAMENESS PREVENTION & CONTROL:** Any form of lameness will negatively impact lamb performance. All lame lambs should be treated and regular foot bathing for prevention is advisable. It is worth noting that good trace element supplementation also aids in the prevention of lameness.

**5. CONCENTRATE FEEDING:** Where grass covers are very tight and stocking rates are high, grouping weaned lambs by their weights is an option to consider. The heaviest lambs ( $\geq 40$ kg) should be grouped together and concentrate feed should be considered to get these lambs finished quicker at minimal cost. Feeding 300-500g/head/day of concentrates should be sufficient once grass quality & weather conditions are reasonable.



# BACK TO BASICS

By **Tim Guinan** - (B.Agr.Sc) - Ph:087 257 3368

We are seeing large differences in the height and yield potential of Forage Maize crops this year. Not alone is this gap emerging between fields, it is also easy to spot very different plant sizes within some fields and even along individual rows. A lot of this can be put down to the presence or absence of starter phosphate fertiliser being put down with the seed at sowing time. The frustrating aspect of this is that the obvious benefits of putting down 15 to 20 units per acre of fertiliser P with all maize crops, irrespective of soil P indices & /or the amount of slurry / fertiliser applied before sowing, has been well documented for decades and that seems to have been forgotten in some quarters.

All spring sown crops in Ireland have a relatively short growing season, so they need to “come of the traps” fast & ground cover established as quickly as possible in order to maximise yield. Adequate supplies of readily available P is essential to achieve this. Phosphorous absorption is much delayed / reduced in colder soils & Maize is a particular temperature sensitive crop. So, it’s no wonder that this year’s maize crops are really displaying why some lessons should never be forgotten - Starter Phosphate applied close to the seed is a must for all Maize crops, all the time.



Winter barley harvest more or less complete at time of printing. Yields varying a lot from over 3.5 down to 2 tonnes per acre. We are definitely seeing the benefits of good rotation coming through this year in many fields. We’ve had one very experienced grower telling us he had half of one field yielding close to 3.75 tonnes per acre and the other half of the same field, sown with the same variety, on the same day, getting with the exact same inputs all year, yielding only slightly above 2.25 tonnes per acre. The difference being, the 4 tonne crop was after Spring Beans, while the 2 tonne crop was following Spring Barley following Beans.

While there was no real signs of take all in either crop & it obviously had a role to play in the poor half of the field, this example does display the massive soil health & soil structure benefits break crops bring to bear and no better crop in this regard than Spring Beans. We have to put a lot more thought into crop rotations, particularly for Autumn sown crops.



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# GRASS WATCH - TAKE THE GUESS WORK OUT OF FEEDING YOUR COWS

By *Damien Guinan* - (B.Agr.Sc) - Ph:086 607 4729

We have been participating in a nation wide Grass Watch programme whereby we submit samples of paddock grass on a weekly basis for feeding quality analysis.

We find these tests very useful in terms of advising our dairy feed customers as regards the appropriate nut to feed and quantities required to support the milk yields being achieved. See last weeks results below.

GRASS QUALITY	Minimum	Average	Maximum
Dry Matter (%)	13.0	15.8	19.4
Est ME (MJ/kg)	9.5	11.3	12.4
Crude Protein (%)	14.4	21.3	28.5
NDF (%)	38	45	59
Oil A (%)	2.7	3.8	4.6
Sugars (%)	4.5	9.2	13.5
UFL	0.74	0.96	1.08

- The above shows the big variation in grass quality around the country.
- Crude protein varied from 14.4% to 28.5% with UFL varying from 0.74 to 1.08.
- This highlights the importance of managing grass quality on farm.
- See the below table for recommended feeding rates based on the expected DMI of your cows.

	COMPOUND REQUIRED (kg/d)					
	13kg DMI	14kg DMI	15kg DMI	16kg DMI	17kg DMI	18kg DMI
24 litres	6.0	5.0	4.0	3.0	2.0	1.0
26 litres	7.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
28 litres	8.1	7.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	3.0
30 litres	9.1	8.1	7.1	6.1	5.0	4.0
32 litres	10.1	9.1	8.1	7.1	6.1	5.1
34 litres	11.1	10.1	9.1	8.1	7.1	6.1

## FORAGE BRASSICA OPTIONS

By *Paul Mooney* - (B.Agr.Sc) - Ph: 086 353 2342

Forage brassicas are still well worth considering to bulk up fodder for the coming winter. We all know the pros and cons of these crops, but like any other crop, be it cereals, beet or whatever, they need to be sown correctly, fertilised appropriately and carefully monitored for a few weeks after sowing in order to get the max return. Light discing followed by rolling after sowing is the most popular method used to establish the seed bed, but this doesn't always work out so you need to be careful.

Up to August 10th, **Redstart** or **Mainstar** would be your preferred option. **Mainstar** is a new hybrid variety similar to **Redstart** but early trial work tells us its higher yielding with a much greater leaf to stem ratio. After August 10th switch to forage rape. Remember the quicker you get these crops sown, the greater the yield. One day of growth in early August can often equal an entire week's growth in September.

Fertiliser requirements and appropriate seeding rates will differ depending on varieties used, sowing methods, crop rotations and base fertility levels. Talk to any member of our technical team for more information.



# MAXIMISING WEANLING PERFORMANCE THIS AUTUMN

By Sean Holian - (B.Agr.Sc) - Ph: 086 832 5325

Autumn can be a very stressful time for spring born suckler calves due to the combination of weaning, increased worm burdens and harsher weather. Calves should only be weaned after they have achieved a concentrate intake of at least 1kg per hd/day for the three weeks prior to weaning. This will help avoid a growth check after weaning and reduce risk of disease.

**Super Weanling Crunch + Lungbooster** is the ideal ration to feed when weaning calves. This is the exact same formulation as our standard Super Weanling crunch, with the added benefit of Lungbooster.

Lungbooster otherwise known as Pulmasure, is a natural plant-based feed additive which has both an antibacterial and mucus cleansing effect on the calf's airways. It gives added protection against all respiratory challenges such as pneumonia. We have been using this product very successfully for many years in our **Wonderthrive + Lungbooster** Calf milk replacer and its benefits are easy to see in these younger animals.

Ideally, weanlings should be fed **Super Weanling Crunch + Lungbooster** for at least 7 days before any expected stress periods. It can also be introduced at the first signs of Pneumonia or any respiratory challenge. Continue feeding through the stress period and for at least 2 weeks afterwards.

Many animals show increased coughing and display runny noses for up to 7 days after being introduced to this feed. Do not worry excessively about this because it is simply an indication that the Lungbooster is clearing mucus from the airways and doing what it's supposed to do. However be sure to consult your vet if these symptoms become severe and/or prolonged.

Products which contain Lungbooster should not be used as a replacement for a well-designed vaccination programme, but they definitely have a role to play in helping you get the best performance from your weanlings this Autumn.



## 4 WAY SHEEP BLOCK

- Delivers high levels of 4 different forms of Zinc to cater for the wide variety of nutrient interactions that can occur in different soils and forages. These interactions often suppress the uptake of vital minerals such as zinc.
- Such high levels of Zinc will help harden your sheep's hooves, improve overall hoof health and reduce the incidence of lameness in your flock.
- The inclusion of high levels of Cobalt is designed to reduce 'summer stop' in lambs, i.e. the all too common reduction in lamb thrive in mid-summer due to cobalt deficiency. Just 2.5g per head per day of this bucket will supply the recommended 1mg of Cobalt that will prevent summer stop in most cases.
- The increased levels of Selenium & Vitamin E are extremely beneficial in terms of disease prevention & avoidance of white muscle disease (Muscular Dystrophy).



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