August/September 2021

TIPPERARY
COOPERATIVE

NEWSLETTER

In this newsletter we will be covering the following topics:

- Animal Health Notes
- CellCheck Tip of the Month
- Farm Development Programme - Focus Farm Data
- Teagasc Environment Newsletter
- Building Grass is the focus for August
- Silage Sampling Campaign 2021

ANIMAL HEALTH NOTES

Compiled by Martin Kavanagh MVB Cert DHH

Dairy rations and PICA

Cows eating stones/clay, (PICA), has been a recurring problem annually on several farms in the area. PICA generally occurs from April to July on affected farms. It is most associated with phosphorus deficiency and is seen on farms that have high stocking rates, recent reseeds and that grow substantial volumes of grass. The cold and wet spring may also have contributed to PICA on some farms. Correcting soil pH and soil phosphorus deficits can help but it appears that rapidly growing spring grass on some farms cannot provide the phosphorus requirement for the average cow. Cows need 0.35% phosphorus in their daily dry matter intake which equates to 70-75 grams of phosphorus per day. Grass samples from the area can range in phosphorus levels of 0.2 -0.3%. So, at a grass intake of 16 kgs of grass in early spring, the grazing provides approximately 40 grams of phosphorus. Four kgs of a standard dairy ration supplies approximately 16 to 20 grams more. Some cows therefore will have a daily deficit of 10-20 grams of phosphorus.

To solve this problem, there are several ways of providing extra phosphorus, through the water, though licks or through the feed. Giving it through the feed is consistent and reliable, like providing enough magnesium to prevent tetany. The farm advisory in Tipperary Co-Op now advises double the amount of phosphorus in the dairy ration for affected farms in the spring. The farms that use rations with a lower protein content e.g., 14-15%, contain 60% cereals, and have 0.8-0.9% phosphorus can manage PICA. The benefits are increased solids yields, better utilisation of feed and maintenance of body condition.

Tipperary Co-Op SCC

Based on the current Co-Op performance reports, the Co-Op average for SCC is 195,000. The top 10% of herds are running at an average 95,000. The goal is to have 85% of the milk supplied coming in less than 250,000. Currently, 81% of milk supplied from our milk suppliers in July was < 250,000.

Selective dry cow therapy will become standard practice in the immediate future. This means that only cows that have a justifiable reason, such as high cell count or a history of mastitis, may receive an antibiotic at dry-off. The pressure is on to resolve chronic SCC issues and excessive treatments for mastitis. Also, the treatments we use today will become less available and are certainly less effective. Treatment of mastitis during lactation has a low cure rate, often as low as 30%, regardless of the antibiotic or treatment used. Cows that get environmental E. coli infections during the lactation and may have a swollen quarter but are not sick, benefit more from anti-inflammatory therapy rather than an antibiotic. Finding out the causative bacteria will help in making the decision to treat or not. Veterinary microbiologists now recommend that certain classes of bacteria should not be treated and the quarter or the cow culled. Discuss this approach with your vet to make better treatment decisions.

Tick Borne fever

During May and June there have been outbreaks of Tick-Borne Fever, a disease caused by a bacteria carried by ticks. The signs are cows coming in with no milk, high temperatures, weak and off-form. Some of these cows are coughing also. The temperatures are often extremely high, well above 40°C. IBR can present similarly, but if an IBR vaccination policy is in place, it is much less likely.

Many of these farms have a history of Redwater, another tick-borne disease, in the past or have deer passing through the farm regularly. Deer and other wildlife spread ticks, and ticks will overwinter in grass covers on the farm.

A vet can carry out a blood test to determine if the signs are caused by Tick Borne fever. Most of these cows respond to simple antibiotic and anti-inflammatory therapy. There are no non-withdrawal products licensed for use against ticks, but the non-milk withdrawal fly and lice pour-ons have some efficacy if used monthly.

If your herd is suffering from an unexplained disease in the summer months that features high temperature and milk drop, do not rule out tick borne diseases.

CELLCHECK TIP OF THE MONTH

No quick-fix when it comes to mastitis control!

"For over 35 years the more I learn about mastitis, the more I realise how much I do not know", explains Michelle McGrath, Assistant Programme Manager for the CellCheck programme. Looking back to my youth, growing up on a dairy farm, if a cow had mastitis you gave her a few tubes and more often than not she got better, or so it seemed. Nowadays, when farmers have a cow with mastitis, they are encouraged to look at the bigger picture, or even better still, to have good management systems in place to reduce the risk of mastitis happening in the first place. There are many different elements required for in effective mastitis control and consequently, many opportunities for things to go wrong. What I am trying to say is there is no quick fix to mastitis control and sometimes it can be the smallest of issues that result in very large problems.

I spoke with Martin Davin in Laois this month as part of our farmer profile and he explained to me about a recent problem he was experiencing with the cows on the farm. "I began noticing a gradual increase in clinical cases of mastitis in late Spring and the cows were becoming very cranky in the parlour". "I set about investigating it with my Veterinary Practitioner, Co-Op advisor and Milking Machine technician and from this collaborative approach we identified a high proportion of cows with teat end damage. The cause of which was the vacuum being too high in the clusters". Martin says that looking back, it was probably a problem for longer than he had realised. The issue is sorted now and the cows have settled and teat ends are returning to normal.

Some timely CellCheck reminders for July

1. **REGULAR MACHINE CHECKS:** Using simple daily, weekly and monthly checks will keep your machine problem free, and provide an early warning if anything is amiss. Check out the farm Guidelines on the AHI website for more detail. https://animalhealthireland.ie/programmes/cellcheck/

2. **TEAT DISINFECTION:** Do not stop during the summer months! Completely cover every teat, of every cow, after every milking. It's the most effective way of preventing new infections and reducing SCC. Some disinfectants also act as fly repellents, helping reduce the number of flies in the parlour during these warm evenings- don't forget that flies also carry mastitis-causing bacteria.

3. **MILK RECORD:** By recording your cows regularly (at least 6 times per lactation) you can easily see what's happening within your herd- which are the problem cows or top performers? Use the CellCheck Farm Summary Report to see the areas of excellence, and those that need attention. All this information will be extremely useful when it comes to drying off cows.

FARM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Please see the current data on the focus farms in the Tipperary Co-Op/Teagasc Farm Development programme.

Week Ending 24th July 2021	John, Charlotte and John G Crowe	Peter Hughes and Paul Maguire	Glen Tour Farms	Seamus, James and Janice Farrell	T.J. Ryan	Solohead Research Farm
Milk Yield (Litres)	23	23.75	23	24	24.6	21
Butterfat %	4.36	4.20	4.12	4.04	3.98	4.39
Protein %	3.68	3.45	3.56	3.51	3.46	3.55
SCC ('000)	102	100	41	175	122	202
Milk Solids/Cow/Day (Kgs)	1.90	1.87	1.81	1.86	1.88	1.71
Concentrate Fed (Parlour Kgs/Days)	2	2	3	2	3	1
Breeding End Date	1st August	3rd August	14th July	30th July	24th July	27th July
Stocking Rate (Lu's/Ha)	2.62	4.5	3.14	3.2	3.44	3
Farm Cover (Kgs DM/Ha)	611	800	553	653	697	755
Cover Per Cow (Kgs DM)	233	180	176	204	203	255
Growth Rate (Kgs DM/Ha/Day)	42	45	43	55	63	61
Fertiliser Spread to Date (Units/Acre)	156	135	150	140	158	120

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Advisory
Newsletter

ENVIRONMENT

August 2021

Low-input grassland

Edited by
Catherine Keena,
Countryside Management Specialist

Farmers with low-input grassland (LIG) in the Results-Based Environment-Agri Pilot Project (REAP) are being rewarded for the number and cover of flowering plants in their extensively managed grassland. The presence of flowers indicates a high level of biodiversity in a field with bees, butterflies and other invertebrates using the flowers. Old grassland of highest value contains species unchanged in centuries – never having been reseeded or fertilised. There is no need to fence field margins in these fields, as the centre of the field is similar to the margins. The biodiversity of extensively farmed grassy fields (with less than 30% ryegrass), which don't contain flowers can be improved by fencing off field margins, allowing the vegetation to flower and seed and develop a structure different to that in the centre of the field. Such rank vegetation provides a habitat for invertebrates, birds and small mammals, which themselves are prey in the food chain.

Types of LIG fields (all with less than 30% ryegrass):

- **flower-rich grasslands** – species-rich old grasslands are a treasure and rewarded with high payments in REAP;
- **grassy fields with traditional grasses and no flower indicators** – grassy margins may be fenced off to get to a field payment of €250/ha; and,
- **some flower indicators** – grassy margins may be fenced to get additional payments of up to €75/ha.

Payments for fields scored as LIG range from €0-€400/ha based on how they score. Wildflowers cannot be sown in REAP LIG. Contrary to common misconception, pollinators don't want you to plant wildflower seed – they want you to allow common wildflowers to grow naturally. Teagasc does not recommend sowing wildflowers on farmland. See LIG indicator flowers on pages 2 and 3.

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LIG indicator flowers


Bedstraw.


Bird's foot trefoil.


Cowslips.


Lady's smock or cuckooflower.


Large umbel.


Lousewort.


Orchid.


Oval sedge.


Oxeye daisy.


Selfheal.


Small umbel.


Sorrel.


Eyebright.


Forget me not.


Knapweed.


Lady's bedstraw.


Marsh marigold.


Marsh thistle.


Meadowsweet.


Mints.


Primroses.


Ragged robin.


Scabious.


Sedge.


Thyme.


Tormentil.


Yellow composites.


Yellow rattle.

MESSAGE FROM SIGNPOST

Why do farmers need to engage with climate action?

1. **Social responsibility**
   We are fortunate to live in a beautiful and diverse part of the world. Our children, and all future generations of farmers, local communities and wider society, deserve the same.
2. **Policy**
   We are bound by international agreements, EU and national policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These policies mean that regulations will need to be implemented in the coming months and years to achieve the targets set.
3. **Protect our markets**
   The consumer is demanding food produced in a more sustainable manner, and farmers have an opportunity to delight these consumers.

4. **Climate change will impact how we farm**
   We will have wetter winters, drier summers, more extreme weather events, as well as increased risk of pests and disease. All of which will create challenges for farming in Ireland.
5. **Improved farm profitability**
   Many of the technologies farmers are being asked to implement to reduce emissions will also reduce costs and improve profitability. Farmers are part of the solution to emissions and this will create opportunities for income generation.

MESSAGE FROM ASSAP

Tillage cover/catch crops can help water quality

There is a high risk of nitrate leaching from free-draining tillage fields in autumn/winter due to the absence of growing crops and high rainfall levels. Farmers can help reduce nitrate losses and impacts on water quality by targeting the establishment of cover or catch crops.

1. Catch or cover crops can take up significant amounts of nitrogen (N) over the autumn period and thereby reduce the risk of nitrate leaching.
2. Sowing date is critical. To be most effective, crops need to be sown as early as possible post harvest to ensure good growth is achieved. Delays in sowing date can impact on growth and reduce their potential to trap soil nitrate.
3. There are many different crop types and mixtures to choose from, including natural regeneration. Care needs to be taken in choosing a catch crop mix for your system that will not impact on subsequent crop rotation. Speak with your advisor.

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For further information on any issues raised in this newsletter, or to access other enterprise newsletters, please contact your local Teagasc adviser or see www.teagasc.ie.

BUILDING GRASS IS THE FOCUS FOR AUGUST!

John Maher, Grass10, Teagasc, Moorepark

August is the month to start building grass for the autumn. The growth of grass during the next six weeks is crucial as the rate of grass growth (supply) will be less than what is eaten (demand) by mid-September.

Grass is needed in the diet of the cow for as long as possible into the end of the year.

Why??

- Grass is the cheapest feed
- Milk solids will be higher
- Milk price will be higher
- Body condition will be better
- Longer grazing season deuces Greenhouse gas emissions
- Longer grazing season reduces slurry

How do we ensure we have enough grass??

The rotation length must be around 28-30 days by Sept. 1st. So we must gain about 2 days in rotation every week during August. Farm cover targets are 300+ kgDM/cow (see table)

Autumn Grazing Plan

August is a crucial month to build grass supply for autumn. An autumn grazing plan is needed to make sure that there is enough grass available for autumn grazing.

On many farms, silage area comes back into grazing in August and thereby lengthening the rotation. Not all dairy farms have silage area available to graze on the platform. This makes it more difficult to build grass supply. Removing other stock from the platform (heifers, calves, cull cows, cows to be culled etc.) will lower the stocking rate thereby reducing feed demand. Many farmers will feed silage (made from surplus grass) to reduce feed demand also helps to build grass supply. In reality, it takes a combination of different actions to increase grass supply during August. Whatever the choice, it is better that additional feed goes into the herd during August to allow grass supply pick up rapidly rather than later on when grass growth is much slower. If things are not going to plan during August in terms of building grass supply, action needs to be taken.

So it is important that a rotation length of 28-30 days is reached by September 1st. It is important to take advantage of August grass growth rates in order to build grass supply. Average grass growth for August is about 60-65 kgDM/ha/day but grass growth can also be 20-25% higher.

If some farmers end up with too much grass entering into the autumn (rotation lengths well over 30 days entering September) this should be made into winter feed. So if the rotation length is gaining too quickly during August, the worst quality paddocks should be removed for baled silage. The earlier this surplus grass is removed, the easier it is to rectify the problem. Outlined below are the grazing targets for dairy farms for August.

Autumn Grazing Targets

Date	Cover/Cow (Kg DM)	Average Farm Cover (Kg DM/Ha)	Rotation Length
STOCKING RATE OF 2.5 LU/HA			
1st August	180	450	20 Days
Mid - August	200	500	25 Days
1st September	300	750	30 Days
STOCKING RATE OF 3.0 LU/HA			
1st August	180	550	20 Days
Mid - August	250	750	25 Days
1st September	330	990	30 Days
STOCKING RATE OF 3.5 LU/HA			
1st August	190	665	20 Days
Mid - August	220	770	25 Days
1st September	280	980	30 Days

Completing an autumn grazing budget on PastureBase is a very useful tool to help every farmer who uses the database reach the autumn grazing targets!

P & K Catch-up!

About 50% of the soils in the Tipp Co-Op region are deficient in Phosphorus & Potassium (K) i.e. Index 1 or 2 for Phosphorus & Potassium. Almost every dairy farmer should be applying a fertiliser with P (if allowance available) & K during August. After August, there is only 2 weeks left to spread nitrogen (N) and Phosphorus (P) fertiliser. Phosphorus levels rise slowly in the soils after application of P fertiliser or slurry. That is why it is necessary to apply P fertiliser now to improve soil fertility for the spring when the grass needs P the most. Converting surplus grass into baled silage harvests a lot K in particular. Most dairy farmers will need to consider spreading compound fertilisers on their grassland during August.

As many heavy land farms have been converting surplus grass into baled silage, this process removes a lot of K from the soil. This needs to be replaced. Every 3-4 bales /acre removed is equivalent to about 1 bag of 0:7:30/acre. So most dairy farmers will need to consider spreading compound fertilisers like 18:6:12, 14:7:14 or 10:10:20 on their grassland during August.

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QUALITY FEEDS

"Last year our cows started to eat stones due to a phosphorus deficiency in the overall diet. I used other products to try to rectify the deficiency before speaking to the Tipperary Co-Op farm services team about incorporating it in our dairy nut. Once it was included in the nut the cows stopped showing visible signs within a couple of days and the problem seemed to resolve quite quickly. I believe the herd did lose a significant amount of production before the feed was introduced.

This year we incorporated phosphorus in the feed from the end of March to minimise the risk and it had a huge impact on cows with the herd supplying 6% more milk for the same period last year from similar input levels. It has made managing the problem very easy as I am feeding the cows anyway. I buy our Dairy Feed from Tipperary Co-Op because I find there is a great range and they are able to tailor to my specific requirements whilst always providing a prompt delivery service."

John, Margaret and Denis O'Dwyer, Knockgorman, Donohill, Co. Tipperary

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