August/September 2020

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Newsletter

In this newsletter we will be covering the following topics:

- **Embryonic Death in your Dairy Herd**
- **Silage Sampling 2020**
- **Fertiliser Recommendations for August/September**
- **CellCheck Tip of the Month**

Coronavirus CV-19 update and business implications.

August 2020

Now that peak milk production has passed for 2020, our industry has a lot to be grateful for. Despite early warnings and concerns about peak processing in the event of factory closures due to CV-19, little if any milk was lost across the industry. The danger of clusters developing in manufacturing plants that could have led to site closures was quite realistic in the early stages. Fortunately, the industry as a whole avoided plant closures and no clusters in dairy processing have been reported.

Operating at an unusually busy level through peak this year with Tipperary Co-Op having completed the new drying facility and waste water treatment plant, we have been fortunate not to have had any cases, related cases or even high temperatures. This is due in large part to very stringent protocols that were put in place in early March and which are likely to remain in place for at least the remainder of 2020.

Market prices and shipping issues created a lot of uncertainty as the pandemic took hold but again, thankfully, the lowest price expectations were avoided and markets recovered somewhat in May and June and into early July.

Prices returning low to mid 20 cent / litre were a very real prospect at the outset but fortunately returns have stayed well above those levels all year. We should not take this situation for granted in the least as the current outlook into early 2021 remains very uncertain. The pandemic infection rate is worsening around the world, particularly in key market regions for Irish Dairy products where there will likely be significant challenges during quarter four and early 2021.

As usual, I want to thank our suppliers and overseas customers but in particular our Agribusiness customers here at home who faced the most disruption during the lockdown. We are happy that we could remain open and provide an unbroken service. Again, this was only possible because suppliers and customers worked with us and observed the strict safety protocols that were necessary.

Our normal advisory committee and AGM schedules have also been disrupted this year due to Covid-19 safety concerns. We will resume as soon as government guidelines allow.

Sincerely,

John Daly

John Daly
Chief Executive

Please Maintain Social Distancing when orders are being delivered or when milk is being collected at farm level, as this will help secure a regular and much needed service.

EMBRYONIC DEATH IN YOUR DAIRY HERD

Compiled by Martin Kavanagh MVB Cert DHH

Embryonic Death:

A number of dairy herds get the cows scanned after 6 weeks of the breeding season to check on conception rates and also to pick up on cows that have lost the embryo and have not returned to heat. There is an opportunity to pick these cows up, treat them and get them served again before the end of the breeding season.

This scan often leads to a panic as the number of cows identified with embryo death can appear high and straight away we look for a problem. Everything gets blamed but in particular minerals and trace elements are looked at as being the issue as it appears a simple fix – bolus or feed or water can 'solve' the problem.

It's worth standing back a little and looking at what is a true problem and what are the likely causes.

First of all what's normal?

When cows are served, ~90% of these serves result in a fertilised egg. Embryonic loss then accounts for 29-39% loss after fertilisation. Most losses (Early Embryonic Death), 28-30%, are between 8-16 days after service and the cow will return to service within the normal cycle of 18-24 days. Late Embryo Death, 7-8%, occours between 16 and 42 days after service, resulting in an increase in the length of the cycle; you may not see these cows return for 35-50 days after the initial service and these cows are the ones that need to be picked up on scan. So, some of this is normal and we need to be careful that we don't look for a problem when there is none. But the expectation is that conception rate to first service is > 55%. When the repeats in the second round are > 45% of the actual number of cows submitted in the first round then we sit up and take note. If the number of LATE embryonic deaths that we pick up on early scan reduce our conception rates to below 50% then again we sit up and take note.

What are the main problems that cause excessive embryo loss?

1. Calving date: Herds that already have a low six week calving rate e.g. below 75%, will struggle with first service conception rate and late embryo death as there are too many cows calved less than 60 days in the first round. Their conception rate will be lower. Compact calving drives compact calving and the only solution may be to gradually improve the six week calving rate with heifers as you have entered a cycle of lower conception rates and subsequently poorer six week calving rate in the cows.
2. Conception rate and embryo survival is linked to negative energy balance in the first 4-6 weeks of lactation; February and March feeding. Excess body score loss and failure to achieve adequate dry matter intakes the month after calving will have a major effect on 1st service conception rates. Each farm will have a different requirement depending on the genetic background, size of the cow, milk production, feed quality, grass supply and quality and overall feed management of the fresh cow.
3. There is little benefit to extra feeding during the breeding season if we have solved the recovery of the cow after calving. But there is evidence that sudden drops in nutrition after AI can impact on embryo survival, Herds that go through periods of low feed intake or poor quality of feed during the breeding season may be more at risk.
4. The effect of high urea on the embryo is disputed in the research. So there is no equivocal answer to this. But it makes sense that we should supplement with low protein feed when at grass, from a cow benefit, a cost benefit and an environmental benefit. When grass is in the diet there is little requirement for dairy rations over 14% Crude Protein. Energy is more important in these supplements so buy the best energy you can in the form of maize meal, barley, and good sources of digestible fibre like hulls or beet pulp. Protein in the ration can be supplied by soya, distillers or rapeseed.
5. Poor rumen function in grazing herds may be an issue on some farms where the intake of high protein and high sugar grass leads to poorer uptake of energy and minerals. Research in this area is limited and there is little evidence that the impact of grazing on rumen function is a major problem but farmer experience of cows losing production both solids and litres, very loose manure, and failing to graze well, is becoming more common and often these herds respond to some drier feed like silage in the diet for a short period.
6. Minerals and Trace elements; This is certainly an issue in herd with low concentrate supplementation rates and have a history of high grass and milk solids production. Basic supplement requirements at pasture should be met, in particular, Calcium, Phosphorus and Magnesium. In genuinely deficient herds, Selenium, Copper, Iodine, and Cobalt supplementation will be required either by bolus, in the water or in the feed. Herbage testing and blood testing of cows will help here but in general herds at high stocking rates and growing a lot of grass need mineral and trace element support.
7. Infectious disease; BVD, Lepto and IBR are the usual culprits so a solid vaccination programme prior to the breeding season makes sense. Neospora is implicated in embryo death by some authors but it is more associated with abortion later in pregnancy. In my experience herds that have a history of chronic Neospora infections struggle with fertility overall and control measures should be in place including testing of suspect cows and their families.
8. Cow health; Lame cows and cows with a poor calving history are always problematic. If the herd suffers from a high percentage of 'dirty' cows after calving, this will impact directly on conception rate and is as a direct result of dry cow body condition and mineral management. If this is the case a review of the herd management from late November will be critical to ensure good uterine health for the next breeding season.
9. There are other issues such as heat detection accuracy, AI timing and quality which will all impact and will require investigation by data analysis if conception rates are an ongoing issue.

Be prepared for embryo death; it occours naturally and some is normal. The main factors involved are calving date and post-calving nutrition.

SILAGE SAMPLING CAMPAIGN 2020

Introduction

Tipperary Co-op is offering a silage sampling and analysis service. We will also be offering mineral and concentrate recommendations for the coming winter based on these results.

Silage in many cases will make up the largest proportion of winter feed on farms. Taking this into consideration it is essential to know how your animal will perform and this service can help you tailor a feed plan for the upcoming winter. If you underestimate the quality of the silage you may be wasting expensive concentrates but if you over estimate the quality you may have poor performance hence effecting live weigh gain of your stock.

Sampling Options

- **Silage Sample Only -** you will get a reading for Dry Matter Content, Preservation Quality, Ash, Energy Value and Protein Content. When a silage sample is tested for the above parameters it can give you an in-depth insight into the quality of your winter feed which in turn will help in creating a feed plan for your winter diet for the particular type of stock you are feeding.
- **Complete Silage & Mineral Analysis -** This test will include the above but will also include a mineral breakdown of your silage. Knowledge of a silage mineral content is required in order to select the appropriate mineral supplementation for drystock, pre-calver and lactating cows. The analysis includes the major minerals (P,K,Ca,Mg,Na,S) and trace elements (Cu, Zn, Se, Co, Fe, Mn, I). This test is very useful to ensure correct mineral supplementation prior to calving and avoid problems like milk fever, held cleanings and dirty cows. Also in many cases herds are only topped up with minerals once a year so it is paramount that you are supplementing correctly for the winter.

If you sign up for a the Complete Silage and Mineral Analysis our Farm Services Team can then assist you in completing a winter diet.

Please contact our Farm Services Team if you would like to avail of this service.

FERTILISER RECOMMENDATION FOR AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

	August	September
Stocking Rate	**Units/Acre (Kgs/Ha)**	**Units/Acre (Kgs/Ha)**
<2	14 (17)	0
2.0-2.5	20 (25)	0
2.5-3.0	28 (34)	0
3.0-3.5	30-35 (37-43)	15-20 (18-24)
>3.5	35-40 (43-49)	15-20 (18-24)

Tipperary Co-op/Teagasc
Farm Walk Notice

The next farm walk for our milk suppliers as part of our farm development programme will be held

at Glen Tour Farms

Date and time to be confirmed subject to Covid 19 guidelines

BUILDING GRASS:
DON'T MISS THE BOAT!!!

Compiled by John Maher, Teagasc Dairy Specialist

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

How do we ensure we have enough grass??

The rotation length must be around 28-30 days by September 1st. So if we have 100 acres of grazing ground we will be grazing about 5 Acres/day (20 day rotation) at the start of August. By the end of the month we need to be grazing about 3.5 acres/day (28 day rotation). 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

PastureBase Ireland data demonstrates that many dairy farmers end up with a lower supply of grass than they would like entering into the autumn. 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. If things are not going to plan during August in terms of building grass supply, action needs to be taken. This can involve removing other stock from the milking platform or introducing additional feed to help slow down the rotation. This can be baled silage or meal or a mixture of both. 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

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 particularly after a dry spell.

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.

Heavy Farms

There is a huge variation in soil type across the Tipp Co-op region. Some of the land is very heavy in nature and therefore it is important that rotation length does not get too long (over 30 days by September 1st). Very long rotations result in very large quantities of grass to be grazed. This grass can prove very difficult to graze during poor weather conditions. The supply of grass on heavy farms is rarely a challenge for heavy land farms. Ground conditions are the main challenge. It is important to avoid grazing covers of grass over 2000 kg DM/ha.

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

CELLCHECK TIP OF THE MONTH

Don't risk it - time for a change!

CellCheck recommends that liners are changed every 2,000 milkings, or every 6 months whichever comes first. This is to help prevent mastitis and ensure that maximum milk yields are being harvested. Cluster liners are designed to flex and squeeze the teat during each pulsation cycle. This massages teats and maintains blood supply. While liners are working they begin to lose tension, absorb fat and hold bacteria. After too many milkings this can reduce the speed and completeness of milking, resulting in a loss in milk yield. It also increases teat end damage and increase the spread of mastitis bacteria. Fatigued rubber can also hold bacteria and this can increase the total bacterial count (TBC) if dirt is being trapped.

To calculate how many days it takes to reach 2,000 milkings, see page 52 of the CellCheck Farm Guidelines for Mastitis Control. For example, for the average Irish milk recording herd of 102 cows, if the full herd has been milking since March 1st in a 12 unit swing over parlour, the milking liners will have clocked up over 2,600 milkings by 31st July. These liners had completed 2,000 milkings by June 26th!

Alternatively, estimate how often you should change your liners, based on the number of rows you're milking:

No. of rows	Days between changes (twice a day milking)
6	167
7	143
8	125
9	111
10	100
11	91
12	83
13	77
14	71

- So, if you're milking 8 rows of cows, you should be changing your liners every 125 days, which is approx every 4 months
- And if you're milking 11 rows of cows, you should be changing your liners every 91 days, which is approx 3 months

FARM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2018-2020

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

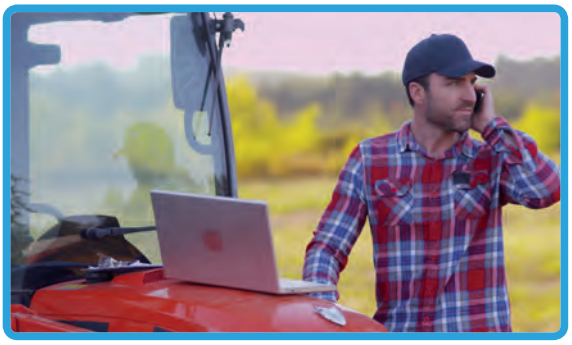
Week Ending 24th July 2020	John, Charlotte and John G Crowe	Peter Hughes and Paul Maguire	Glen Tour Farms	Seamus, James and Janice Farrell	T.J. Ryan	Solohead Research Farm	Average
Milk Yield (Litres)	23.5	23	22	26	25	22	24
Butterfat %	4.26	4.27	4.23	4.18	4.20	4.47	4.27
Protein %	3.73	3.55	3.71	3.60	3.70	3.65	3.66
SCC ('000)	153	53	75	100	77	156	102
MS/Cow/Day (Kgs)	1.93	1.85	1.79	2.08	2.03	1.83	1.92
Concentrate Fed (kgs/Days)	3	0.75	2.5	2	2	1	2
Breeding End Date	17th July	31st July	18th July	27th July	22nd July	24th July	
Stocking Rate on Milking Platform (Lu's/Ha)	3.37	4.48	3.28	2.89	3.29	3.94	3.54
Farm Cover (Kgs DM/HA)	693	906	594	630	749	690	710
Cover Per Cow (Kgs DM)	206	202	181	218	227	175	202
Growth (Kgs DM/Day/Ha)	82	74	79	65	75	58	72
Fertiliser Spread to Date (Units/Acre)	160	170	150	150	150	145	154

Due to the current restrictions at farm level over the last number of months, our focus farms kindly agreed to give video updates on their farms which were sent out by text to all milk suppliers over a six week period. If you missed any of the videos please type the following links highlighted in red into your internet browser:

1. SOLOHEAD RESEARCH FARM https://bit.ly/2zhGSt3
2. PETER HUGHES AND PAUL MAGUIRE https://bit.ly/2AmEZv7
3. GLEN TOUR FARMS https://bit.ly/2Y7cpGj
4. JOHN, CHARLOTTE AND JOHN G CROWE https://bit.ly/3dVPR2b
5. TJ AND TOM RYAN https://bit.ly/37GDGDY
6. JAMES, SEAMUS AND JANICE FARRELL https://bit.ly/2CGqlA9

FREE COMPUTER TRAINING
FOR TIPPERARY CO-OP MILK SUPPLIERS

Tipperary ETB, under Skills for Work, are offering fully funded training courses in using the online Animal Identification and Movement System (AIM). There are huge benefits to using the online system including:



- ✓ Registering bovine calf births
- ✓ Viewing your herd profile
- ✓ Using AIM as your herd register
- ✓ Viewing individual bovine and animal details
- ✓ Creating/Applying for certificates of compliance
- ✓ Notifying a farm to farm movement online

Courses will run from mid- October to late December in a number of locations throughout the county.

If you are interested in attending, or finding out about eligibility, please contact:

Lavinia English on 0504 20384 or 087 2904160

We prioritise farmers who left school early or who have been out of school for some time and need help getting started with IT. Other free classes available under Skills for Work are:
Introduction to internet and emailing, Word-processing, Excel and Expanding your business through Facebook.

etb Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Thiobraid Árann Tipperary Education and Training Board

SOLAS learning works

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna Department of Education and Skills

Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020 Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union

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