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IRISH

JULY 2023

# FARMERS

## MONTHLY

**ANIMAL HEALTH FOCUS**

**+ BIG INTERVIEW: VET, DONAL LYNCH**

**+ SIGNPOST: MOVING HEALTH STATUS  
IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**

**+ ANTHELMINTICS: PROLONGING EFFECTIVENESS**

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JULY 2023

## EDITORIAL

Matt O'Keeffe, Editor

REDUCING GASEOUS EMISSIONS:  
WHAT WILL IT ACHIEVE?

Reducing the contribution of gaseous emissions to climate change is now a widely adopted 21st-century imperative. Clearly, Ireland must play its due role in addressing this challenge. However, the practical benefits, in terms of global impact, are clearly minimal, given our geographical size and population, as well as the relatively small scale of the Irish economy, including agriculture.

Despite the contention that our livestock are a real and present danger to humanity's wellbeing, the elimination of our entire cattle herd would be irrelevant to the mitigation of climate-change vectors. Why then the increasing preoccupation with reducing emissions from Irish agriculture, apart from complying with EU commitments? Perhaps realism has been overwhelmed by idealism. Nevertheless, various measures are being advanced to reduce gaseous emissions from Irish agriculture. Increasingly stringent measures, such as reducing cattle numbers and re-wetting farmland, are likely to be adopted in response to the concerns regarding climate change. Even at this stage, there should be an objective reflection on both the direction and speed of movement, as well as on the ultimate aims and outcomes gathering momentum towards reducing Irish food production.

There is an immediate requirement, even at this late juncture, for an objective assessment of the economic and social implications of specific environmental and climate-change mitigation measures. Such a cost-benefit analysis could be undertaken relatively quickly. It would provide a strategic basis for prioritising remedial actions and would also facilitate better-informed public deliberations on upcoming measures, in place of the prevailing circular arguments. Why this strategy has not already been undertaken is problematic, if not altogether surprising. Tracking improvements in gaseous emissions over time is becoming increasingly essential. This requires a baseline measurement

across Irish farms. This could be done by incorporating the dimension of gaseous emissions into Teagasc's Farm Management Survey. Determination of the levels of emissions from a randomised subset of farms covered by the survey would provide an ongoing credible system for assessing the relative contributions of individual mitigation measures introduced to alleviate gaseous emissions from Irish agriculture. Teagasc's Signpost Programme and the series of towers being established to measure CO<sub>2</sub> uptake and output across grassland and crops, should provide much-needed data to contribute to an objective cost-benefit analysis. Unfortunately, there is little evidence that a considered approach is being adopted by regulators and political leaders. Knee-jerk reactions and quick fixes are rarely of lasting value. Downstream and upstream economic impacts should be measured before crude rewetting and livestock-reduction strategies are implemented.

Despite the opinions of a few often-quoted environmental commentators, Irish agriculture is and should continue to be a valuable economic driver for rural Ireland and beyond. Simplistic comparisons to other sectors using spurious GDP figures do not stand up to close scrutiny. Even the Central Statistics Office has come to realise that a more nuanced approach is required to differentiate creative global corporate bookkeeping from actual physical indigenous output. The economic and employment value of Irish food production should not be jeopardised before an intense analysis of the long-term impacts of government and EU policies is completed.

Of course, individual farmers have the right to voluntarily adopt whatever proposals are placed in front of them. There should be no argument there. What must be considered, in tandem, are the wider effects of these proposals, if implemented, on our entire agri-food sector. It is unacceptable that we have no analysis of these wider implications.

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Editor: Matt O'Keeffe Deputy Editor: Bernie Commins Editorial Director: Miriam Atkins Machinery Editor: Noel Dunne  
Production: Martin Whelan Advertising Manager: Brian Murphy  
Commercial and Advertising Manager: Anna Douglas Accounts: Tricia Murtagh Administration & Subscriptions: Sue Nolan  
Chief Executive: Rebecca Markey Printing: W&G Baird Publishers: IFP Media Subscription: €46 per annum  
Irish Farmers Monthly, Castlecourt, Glenageary, Co. Dublin.  
Tel: +353 1 7096900 • Email: miriamatkins@ifpmedia.com and berniecommins@ifpmedia.com • www.irishfarmersmonthly.com  
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## ALLTECH ONE A GREAT SUCCESS

**Five hundred Irish and global delegates attended last month's Alltech ONE Conference on the Dublin leg of its world tour.**

The opening session was moderated by Alltech country manager, Cathal McCormack, who was joined on stage by Dr Mark Lyons, Alltech president and CEO, who gave the keynote address. He then invited Dr Vaughan Holder, research project manager, Alltech and Nikki Putnam Badding, managing director, Acutia, to discuss agriculture's role in saving the planet. According to Dr Holder, agriculture has gone from having the most important job in the world to now performing the two most important jobs, feeding the world

and reversing climate change. He feels that agriculturalists sit in a unique position as we can replenish our planet and provide nutrition for all. European Commissioner for Financial Services, Mairead McGuinness, spoke passionately about the challenges facing farmers in the coming years. She cited the challenge of change, pointing out that the hardest thing to change is your mind if you've already got it made up. She suggested that efforts must be made to ease tensions between farmers and environmental groups, and that farmers need to embrace change when they know 'the why and the how' - perhaps a subtle dig at some of the negative

reactions to the contentious EU Nature Restoration Law.

Another speaker was Dmitry Skornyakow, CEO, HarvEAST, which manages 200,000 hectares of farmland and 17,500 head of livestock in Crimea and Donetsk in Ukraine. Its activities include dairy and growing wheat, barley, sunflower and corn. Dmitry gave an insight into how the company has adapted to the challenges of the Russian invasion. The war, as we know, has created severe economic uncertainty, driving many Ukrainian farmers to the brink of bankruptcy. This has contributed to high prices and price volatility around the world.

## DAIRY EXTRAVAGANZA

**The Irish Grassland Association concludes its series of sheep, beef and dairy summer tours this month with visits to three dairy farms across Cavan and Meath.**

The IGA Dairy Tour will bring members and supporters together on July 17 to Mark Cassidy's farm in Kells, Co. Meath, to see first-hand how Mark manages his 390-cow herd, producing over 500kg of milk solids. Day two of the IGA tour moves to Cavan with visits to the Brodie and Brady farms. Owen Brodie's farm produced almost 14 tonnes of grass DM per hectare last year to feed his 200 cows, delivering 518kg of milk solids. With land fragmentation and

some heavy soils, many attendees will be able to identify with the challenges the Brodie dairy farm poses.

Also based in Cavan, David Brady's farm hosts two main enterprises, including milk and free-range egg production. With an average EBI of €212 and 541kg milk solids, the 110-cow Brady herd is one of the most productive in the country. Grass management, excellent cow and soil fertility and high productivity are features of all three farms and will provide key discussion points for everyone attending. Registration for the IGA Summer Dairy Tour can be located on the IGA website, [www.irishgrassland.ie](http://www.irishgrassland.ie).





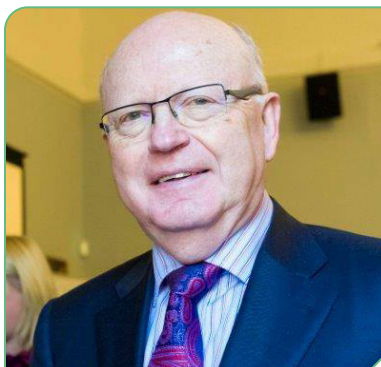
## ALLTECH ANNOUNCES NEW LEADERSHIP ROLES

Orla McAleer will take on a new role within Alltech as chief culture officer, while Susanna Elliott will head up a global role within Alltech as chief marketing and communications officer. Brian Lawless will work directly with Dr Mark Lyons as chief of staff. Alltech has over 5,000 employees worldwide, and operates in 120 markets. Both Orla and Susanna will work closely with Tara McCarthy, who is vice president ESG at Alltech, in advancing its Planet of Plenty vision.

## GUILD ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

The Southern Guild of Agricultural Journalists of Ireland recently held its AGM, and elected *AgriLand* editor, Stella Meehan, as chair, with Alltech's Elaine Keaveny taking on the role of secretary, and Michelle Jordan, Bord Bia, elected as treasurer. The new president of the Guild is Matt O'Keeffe, editor of *Irish Farmers Monthly*, with Rachel Martin, farming editor, *Irish Examiner*, taking on the role of international delegate.

## REMEMBERING DR NOEL CAWLEY



**As *Irish Farmers Monthly* was about to go to print, the sad news came in that Dr Noel Cawley had died. He was one of the giants of the Irish agri-sector over many years.** Noel grew up on a farm in Sligo. He completed a science degree in University College Galway, secured a PhD from University College Dublin and won a Fulbright scholarship to the US, before taking on a role with Guinness in the UK. Noel began his long career with the Irish Dairy Board (IDB), now Ornu, in 1974, culminating in his appointment as CEO for 17 years until he retired in 2006. He oversaw significant expansion of revenues and market reach by the board during his tenure. Overall Kerrygold branded sales doubled in 2002, at a time when Irish milk production was still shackled

by quotas. The current status of Kerrygold as an iconic international dairy brand is in no small way due to Dr Noel Cawley's efforts. In the year before Dr Noel retired as CEO of the IDB, Kerrygold brand sales in the US experienced 20 per cent growth. IDB sales into the Chinese dairy market were also developed under Noel's direction. In the years since his retirement from the IDB, Noel was as energetic and committed as ever, leading the broad agriculture industry across a range of platforms. He was appointed chair of Teagasc in 2008 and served two five-year terms, contributing much to the development of the research, advisory and educational body during his years of involvement. There was another side to Noel Cawley entirely. A life-long lover of all things equine, he developed a top-class sports-horse stud farm in Kildare, breeding international showjumpers that competed for honours across the world. In his own estimation, Irco Rain was one of his best brood mares, breeding three Nations Cup horses over her lifetime at Noel's Newpark Lodge Stud. Noel also contributed greatly to the overall Irish horse sector as chairman of the Irish Horse Board from 1993 to 2001. We extend our deepest sympathies to the Cawley family at this sad time.

## FTMTA SHOWTIME

**Taking place at Punchestown on July 5-6, the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA) Farm Machinery Show is Ireland's largest dedicated machinery show.** The first show was held in February 1989 and was opened by the then Minister for Agriculture, Michael O'Kennedy. It was the brainchild of two giants of the machinery industry, the late John Perry and Geoff Daly. For 160 years, the RDS had run the Spring Show, encompassing machinery

displays in its broad exhibition of Irish agriculture. However, despite its success over the years, the continuation of the show as a set piece at the Ballsbridge RDS venue in the middle of Dublin became impractical and, perhaps, a bit dated, and the last Spring Show was held in 1992. The FTMTA saw a gap in the market and their machinery show flourished, with the big Irish and international machinery manufacturers, trade dealers and service providers backing the event. Ironically the first FTMTA show was held in the RDS, before moving to Punchestown in 2003.



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## QUOTAS FOR EVERYONE!

It's not only milk producers who can look forward with concern to a virtual re-introduction of quotas if the environment lobby have their way. Fresh from hearing of plans to buy-out and cull 200,000 dairy cows, there are now proposals to introduce quotas on air travel. Car travel quotas will probably be next, followed by limits on phone use, TV viewing, and showering. The latter could be the most contentious, especially among teenagers who love their long, leisurely showers with no thought for the water and energy scarcities they are creating. Limits on family size might also be a thing as the world's population is currently 8 billion.

It all points to more restricted lifestyles, curtailed by the ambition to protect the planet from human activities. Let's hope the proposed flight restrictions do not extend to politicians, NGOs or other environmentally conscientious attendees at the exotic COP conference locations. Otherwise, who will save us all from ourselves? OK, I jest! But seriously, a 200,000-cow cull looks impressive until you realise that Brazil plans to increase its cattle herd by 24 million within the next seven years, bringing it to over 200 million head. Australia's cattle herd increase of 4.22 million since 2020 looks paltry by comparison. Is there an Irish joke in there somewhere?

## PATTEN TO STEP BACK FROM GLANBIA FRONTLINE

**Michael Patten is to take a step back from Glanbia having announced recently that he is leaving his post as chief environmental social governance and corporate affairs officer at the ingredients and nutrition group.** What an extraordinary career Michael Patten has had, having worked in the agri-food-related industry for nearly four decades.

He started his public relations career in Sheedy Communications working with one of his early mentors, Larry Sheedy. Stints with Fleishman Hilliard Saunders and Waterford Foods followed, before the Avonmore/Waterford merger created Glanbia, with Michael taking on a senior corporate affairs role in the new company. Michael moved to Diageo in 2003 before returning to Glanbia 10 years later to take on roles as head of human relations and corporate affairs. Highly regarded in the industry, Michael played a major role in developing Glanbia into the multinational business it is today. Far from retiring, however, Michael will remain with Glanbia as an advisor as well as continuing his varied work with other



organisations and charities through non-executive board roles. The Patten family is steeped in public relations, with Michael's father, Owen having worked for many years in PR, and as a political adviser to the late Taoiseach, Charles Haughey. We wish Michael, Nina and the family well.

## KERRY SAGA CONTINUES

**The long-running Kerry Group-Kerry Co-Op saga over who should pay what for which assets shows little sign of final resolution. However, the appointment of Jim Woulfe as an advisor to the Kerry Co-Op board may provide some impetus.** His role is to advise on a strategic review being undertaken by the co-op this year. The first priority could be to bring about the conditions necessary for Kerry Co-Op to take ownership of the Kerry milk pool. It's not as if the finance is not available, but more to do with what that wealth should be used for. Milk producers are in a minority of shareholders and need the tacit support of thousands of dry shareholders with no skin in the game, if there is to be any chance of the co-op moving into milk-processing control and ownership. It's not even a case of 'the best price' anymore. Even being paid the same as neighbours, Dairygold, would satisfy most Kerry milk suppliers at this stage.



## WELL-DESERVED ACCOLADE FOR DAN BROWNE

The Agricultural Trust presented Dan Browne with an award last month and if ever someone deserved recognition for his contribution to the agricultural industry it is Dan. After graduating from University College Dublin, he joined An Foras Taluntais and his first job was at Johnstown Castle in Wexford. He was the third scientist to be recruited to Moorepark Dairy Research Centre after its foundation. In 1974, Dan joined Cork Marts, which gave him his first experiences in the Irish beef sector. In 1980 he and the Queally brothers, Peter and John, formed Dawn Meats. Dan Managed the meat company, growing it into a €2bn revenue international business over the following 27 years through organic growth as well as acquisitions. Dawn Meats now employs 7,200 staff in eight countries. Dan has served as chairman of Teagasc and Bord Bia and is extremely well regarded and respected in the agri-food industry. Dan still sits on the Agricultural Trust board.



## EATING AND DRINKING IN OATS

Tirlán is the latest company to enter the plant-based drinks market. The Kilkenny-based co-op clearly sees potential in the sector and has introduced a range of novel beverages in recent weeks. Using oats from its 1,100 cereal producers, Tirlán has developed an oat drink for general use as well as a specialised barista constituent. Care has been taken to refer to the product as a 'drink' as distinct from a 'milk'. While most of us still consider oats as a go-to breakfast cereal, there is at least some demand for an alternative to dairy milk in the morning tea or coffee. Tirlán has also developed a high-fibre drink. Avonmore Fibre Plus Milk contains a type of fibre called chicory root, which, it is claimed, helps support gut health. It's also enriched with vitamin C and vitamin D. While it is milk-based, the milk solids content is marginal, with only 1 per cent butterfat. Personally, if I want more fibre, I'll bake some wholemeal bread. Still, the Fibre Plus Milk is a novel introduction that is aimed at those who want to improve their gut health while at the same time enjoying a dairy-milk-based top-up in their hot drinks, porridge or smoothies.

## SUCKLED CALVES COULD BENEFIT FROM A TRACE MINERAL SUPPLEMENTATION DURING THE GRAZING SEASON

Significant trace mineral transfer in the last trimester of pregnancy leads to liver minerals levels in calves at birth which are typically higher than the dam's levels.

Diseases of significant importance (diarrhoea, perinatal mortality and vaccine failure) have been linked to inadequate transfer of copper, selenium and zinc in beef and dairy calves when the cow has poor trace mineral levels pre-calving<sup>1</sup>. This pre-birth loading of the calf's liver occurs because cow milk is an exceptionally poor source of trace minerals<sup>2</sup>.

Some continental beef breeds are relatively poor milkers, coupled with the low trace mineral levels in milk, means that as calves grow they will deplete their trace mineral stores, which could lead to subclinical or



clinical deficiency developing mid-season, adversely affecting growth rates<sup>3</sup>. For example, copper deficiency has been linked with poor growth in cattle, zinc deficiency is characterised by poorer growth and loss of appetite and selenium deficiency is a known cause of reduced growth and ill-thrift in cattle<sup>2</sup>.

Livestock farmers are advised to talk to their veterinary surgeon about how an injectable combination trace mineral may benefit their calves during the grazing season.

In a study published by Iowa State University, during a 90-day period, marginally deficient steers supplemented with a combination injectable trace mineral maintained greater average daily gains than control cattle. Additionally, supplemented steers had numerically greater dry matter intakes than controls during the first few weeks of the trial<sup>4</sup>.

Injectable trace minerals bypass the harsh rumen environment and rapidly raise circulating mineral levels in cattle within 8-10hr and after 24hr key mineral storage organs like the liver show raised mineral concentrations<sup>5</sup>.

For years a combination, injectable trace mineral solution has been trusted by farmers and vets around the world to maintain trace mineral supply in their herds throughout the grazing season, a vital period for growth and performance in young stock.

## ASK YOUR VET ABOUT STRATEGIC TRACE MINERAL INJECTION.

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# InTouch

## DEALING WITH HEAT STRESS

CATHAL BOHANE,  
INTOUCH NUTRITION

The weather is always an issue in farming and, even without drilling into the data, we can observe that, while we get our typical averages for the year, we are getting more extended extremes of weather events; from drought and higher temperatures to excessive rainfall from time to time, which is becoming harder to manage depending on your location and land type.

While we had welcome downpours in certain locations around the country in the later stages of this past month, for the most part, rainfall was only a fraction of last year's levels and still lower than 2021 levels. Heat stress has now become more of a common term in farming circles in Ireland and, although we might not hit the temperature highs of the continent, there are days where we are, by definition, in heat stress.

Heat stress is a point where an animal cannot control their own body temperature. The ideal temperature of a dairy cow's environment is in the range of 5°-15°C; beyond this, she will use her energy to control temperature. Heat stress involves both temperature and humidity, as outlined below.

	Relative humidity %								
°C	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
24									
26									
28									
30									
32									

	No Heat Stress
	Moderate Heat Stress
	Severe Heat Stress

Heat stress will negatively affect a wide variety of areas, including yield (10-25 per cent), decreased conception rate and immunity, increased risk of mastitis and lameness, and poor rumen function. The focus is to make cows as comfortable as possible, and we can borrow some solutions worked out by our European neighbours in different farm systems. Water is the cornerstone and it is essential to provide enough clean water, supplying extra troughs during extreme weather, aiming for a seven-litre reserve and 0.15-litre flow rate per cow. Avoid leaving cows standing in yards for too long. When you do put them out, wash down the yard before arrival or set up a makeshift sprinkler system. Do keep in mind, though, that research has shown that misting should not be on for too long since it exacerbates humidity and cows should be allowed to dry. Managing grass growth and bringing in supplementation is also vitally important. Be sure you have enough and avoid running out. Allocating new grass overnight, when it is cool, increases intake. It is also important to increase the energy content of the diet, using high-quality, concentrated feed to keep overall energy up when intake is down. During this phase, also look for signs indicating rumen health, like the quality of the manure, to avoid the balance being tipped. Use slower starches, such as maize meal, and be sure to increase mineral intake.

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## ABP ACQUIRES SCOTBEEF SITES

ABP has acquired the Bridge of Allan abattoir and Queenslie meat-packing plant in Scotland from Scotbeef. The two facilities will become part of the company's UK meat division, which also includes an existing processing facility in Perth, Scotland.

The sale is expected to be completed at the end of July. Commenting on the announcement, Frank Stephenson, group chief executive of ABP said: "We look forward to working with the team in Scotbeef to ensure a smooth and seamless transition for farmer suppliers, colleagues and customers at the Queenslie and Bridge of Allan plants. It will be very much business as usual with a commitment to building on Scotbeef's well-established tradition and reputation for high-quality Scottish red meat products." With nearly 70 years' experience and over 40 years in Scotland, ABP is known for supplying fresh and frozen meat products to retailers, and foodservice providers in the UK and worldwide. ABP employs over 13,000 colleagues across its four divisions: red meat, pet foods, renewables and proteins, with processing facilities in nine countries and a turnover of €5bn.

## IFA CALLS FOR FARM WORKERS TO BE INCLUDED ON CRITICAL SKILLS LIST

The Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) is looking for farm workers to be categorised as critical skills for the purpose of securing work permits. The Government recently announced a review of the Critical Skills Occupation List. IFA president, Tim Cullinan said the IFA would be making a submission on this important issue. "Across our farm sectors, there is huge pressure to source workers from outside the EU. At a time of full employment, it's increasingly difficult to source farm workers in Ireland and in the EU," he said. "Under the current system, if a farmer wants to bring in a non-EU worker, they must apply as a 'production or site manager' on the critical skills list, which is more costly and has a lot of additional red tape. Often, by the time the process is complete the worker, who must be identified at the beginning of the process, could have taken up work elsewhere. Then the farmer is out of pocket and s/he must start a new application from scratch again," he said. The dairy, pig, poultry and horticulture sectors are those most in need of extra workers. The allocation of general employment permits for the horticulture sector is now fully utilised. Although these permits were not ideal for all horticulture sectors, they did provide some level of security for the sector. The longstanding issue of labour availability is a key constraint for Irish horticulture and rapid changes must be made to ensure the sector has access to a continuous supply of employees.





**Damien O'Reilly**  
EU Affairs and  
Communications Manager, ICOS

## LETTER FROM BRUSSELS

This time next year we will have voted in the 2024 European elections. From June 6 to June 9, tens of millions of EU citizens will exercise their democratic right at the ballot box to elect over 700 new MEPs including one extra for Ireland, bringing our representation to 14. And in the run up to next year, no doubt there will be the usual lazy media commentary questioning what MEPs do, and the size of their salaries. If you have been following the contentious debate around the EU Commission's Nature Restoration Law, you will know exactly the significance of the role of MEPs in shaping important legislation. In simple terms, the EU Commission proposes laws and regulations and MEPs make amendments before the final trilogue sign off involving heads of government. From a farming perspective, you could say that every chore done on the farm from dawn until dusk is wrapped in some form of EU legislation with MEPs' fingerprints. So, do not underestimate the value of your vote in next year's elections, particularly if you are involved in the agri-food sector, for there are reams of important legislation coming down the tracks intertwining food production with environmental protection. The MEPs we elect across Europe will be at the heart of that critical decision-making running towards 2030. The political make-up of that parliament too will sway thinking, which will affect positively or negatively against landowners.

The Irish turnout for the last European election in 2019 was just below 50 per cent indicating a disinterest among the public in these elections. However, a survey just published by Eurobarometer asking citizens about their awareness of the elections and the EU, in general, makes interesting reading. Of the Irish citizens surveyed, 64 per cent said they have a totally positive image of the European Parliament compared to just 37 per cent across all of the EU. Interestingly, when asked how interested they were in next year's election, 56 per cent of Irish respondents said they were interested compared to 66 per cent across the EU.

Fine Gael's Sean Kelly is Ireland's longest-serving MEP and the only incumbent with more than two terms. He intends to run again next year. To get into positions of influence on committees in the European Parliament, experience is paramount. There is little point in complaining about EU legislation and its impact on our daily lives if we are not thinking about who we send to represent us. Aside from the Parliament, Ireland is losing its influence in the institutions also. That is a huge concern. Michael Scannell's recent retirement as deputy director general in DG Agri is a reminder of that dearth of senior Irish talent within the Commission. The average age of the Irish dotted across the EU Commission is also among the oldest of the member states.

So, while it might be far down our list of priorities, the value of your vote in the European election next June should not be underestimated, particularly if you are a farmer.



## Growth recovery and future proofing

**Maeve Regan,**  
Head of Ruminant Nutrition, Agritech

After several dry weeks, growth rates are steadily improving following rainfall in mid to late June. However, the nationwide recovery is projected to take some time. Grass quality remains a recurring issue with many herds, resulting in a slip in milk solids/output. Poor spring graze outs in challenging conditions, coupled with moisture stressed grass, has made life difficult in yards over the past month.

In dry conditions, the grass plant starts to enter survival/reproductive mode, throwing out a seed-head and excessive stem rather than leaf, even at low covers. During these periods, it's important to hold rotation length to 20-25 days and AFC to 700-800 kg DM/ha (minimum threshold of 500 kg DM/ha) to support growth rates.

### Not a time for waste

But it is not a time for waste as residuals of 4cm must be achieved in order to have high quality swards coming back into the rotation when growth rates are rectified. Where reseeds are struggling, graze lightly to encourage tillering. Walking grass once or twice weekly to calculate grass availability remains essential. With a typical spring calving herd, once peak has passed, average milk yield decline should be no greater than 2.5% per week after peak milk yield is normal.

Where grass quality is poor, and/or silage is reintroduced, be mindful to cover the cow's energy requirements (especially where forage quality is low) by increasing concentrate supplementation where an energy deficit occurs, until grass quality and quantity increases. Reduced energy density will result in falling milk protein and reduced milk output.

### Taking stock in yards

It seems early to be thinking about this winter but with first cuts completed, very little surplus bales taken in the year to date and a prolonged winter/spring, planning for winter forage reserves is essential. Consider how much second/third cut is necessary, relative to your requirement, along with other alternative strategies. With later cuts, the temptation of chasing bulk is natural where reserves are low. It is easier - and cheaper - to stretch high quality silage rather than feeding alongside poor-quality silage this winter.

**For more information contact your local Agritech Sales Advisor or visit [www.agritech.ie](http://www.agritech.ie).**





## DAWN MEATS SELLS MINORITY SHARE IN ELIVIA

Dawn Meats has sold its minority shareholding in Elivia to Terrena, the majority shareholder of the French company. In the period since 2015, significant investments have been made at Elivia and improved performance has resulted from the collaboration of the two companies. Following ongoing discussions and a review of long-term business strategy, both parties have decided on alternative arrangements for the ownership of the company. Niall Browne, CEO of Dawn Meats said: "We found that our vision for the French market and our ambition for the future

strategic direction of Elivia are not aligned with that of our partner Terrena, and we have therefore decided to dispose of our shareholding in Elivia. We wish the company and its employees all the best in their future endeavours.

"The French market is strategically important for beef and lamb, and we will continue to engage and develop new opportunities in the market. Independently of our involvement with Elivia and within the same timescale, Dawn Meats and our UK division Dunbia have more than doubled in size and our management team will continue to successfully grow the

business with further developments in the pipeline."

Terrena is a cooperative of farmers rooted in the northwest of France, and the parent company of an agri-food group. With annual sales of €5.4bn, 20,117 member farms and 12,366 employees, Terrena is one of the major players in agriculture and agrifood in France.

This disposal by Dawn Meats of its stake in Elivia to Terrena is subject to the approval of all appropriate antitrust authorisations from the competent authorities in France and abroad. Details of the deal are to remain confidential.

### Product launch



## CHANELLE LAUNCHES NEW MOXIDECTIN PRODUCT

Chanelle Pharma has launched Moxodex, a moxidectin product specifically designed for the treatment of worms, lice, and mange in cattle. According to a company spokesperson, Moxodex is an 'easy-to-apply pour-on formulation, providing convenience and efficiency during administration'. Moxodex incorporates the same trusted active ingredients found in the industry-leading brand, Cydectin, the company said. Rory Campbell, national sales manager at Chanelle Pharma said Moxodex provides 'long-lasting effectiveness, allowing farmers to dose less frequently'. Moxodex is available in various pack sizes, including 1L, 2.5L, and 5L options.

## NEW CAMPAIGN TELLS THE FULL IRISH STORY OF FARMING

A still image from the NDC ad featuring dairy farmer, Miriam Gunn.

The National Dairy Council (NDC) has recently launched a new nationwide marketing campaign which aims to introduce the 'Grass Roots Movement' to consumers across Ireland. The Grass Roots Movement brings together the strength of Ireland's dairy industry creating a united front on environmental sustainability to ensure a successful future for Irish dairy, a spokesperson for the NDC said.

The NDC said it forges a link between farmers and consumers, sharing the stories of changing farming practices, of technological innovation and tangible results, of commitment to today's targets coupled with the appetite to do more.

"Farming is all too often portrayed negatively, particularly when it comes to environmental impact. The full story of Irish dairy farming is one that needs to be communicated and understood as the national discourse continues to target dairy farming as an environmental challenge, without reference to the work that is already ongoing, according to the NDC. "Litre for litre, Irish milk already has a lower carbon footprint than milk produced almost anywhere else – not many people know that. Of course, as with all sectors there is lots more work to do."

The first billboard executions – which also featured in a takeover of the Luas Green Line – focus on the actions that Irish dairy farmers are taking to reduce their environmental impact, and the natural advantages that Ireland has when it comes to dairy production such as: introducing white clover into dairy pastures, reducing the need for chemical fertilisers by as much as 40 per cent; encouraging biodiversity and increasing land's ability to sequester CO<sub>2</sub>; and producing grass-fuelled nutritious milk.

Directed by Brian Williams, the campaign features two of the NDC's farmer ambassadors, Miriam Gunn, dairy farmer from Co. Roscommon and Gearoid Maher, a fourth-generation dairy farmer from Cappamore in Co. Limerick, whose family have been farming the land since the mid-1800s.





# HERDWATCH ACQUIRES KINGSWOOD COMPUTING

Farm-software company, Herdwatch, has bought Kingswood Computing Ltd, which supplies herd-management and accounting software to farmers and agri-businesses, as well as software solutions for veterinary practices and farm contractors across Ireland and the UK. Herdwatch says it expects the acquisition to grow its customer base to a point where more than a third of Irish dairy farms will be on its platform. This move comes just weeks after Tipperary-based Herdwatch announced its acquisition of Farmplan's livestock software customers in the UK, and six months after securing a multi-million investment led by Renatus Capital Partners, backed by the Irish Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF). The company says it is planning further announcements in the coming months. The deal will see Kingswood employees join Herdwatch's growing team of more than 60 people. There are no changes for Kingswood customers in Ireland and the UK, the company says, who will be able to continue using their existing software products and get full support from the Kingswood team. New developments will incorporate the best features of both software platforms over time, giving Kingswood

customers access to the continuous innovations Herdwatch is known for, including its advanced cloud technology and the 'Buy & Sell' platform, which allows their members to advertise and buy cattle online, commission-free. Herdwatch members will themselves benefit from advanced technology and integrations developed by Kingswood such as links with milking parlours, marts, co-ops, factories, vets and more, the company says.

Gerry Lyskey, Kingswood founder, said: "I wanted to put Kingswood in the best possible position for future success and growth while at the same time promising exceptional customer experience as well as a vibrant work environment, which is why Herdwatch is such a great fit." Fabien Peyaud, CEO and co-founder of Herdwatch said: "Gerry has been a pioneer in the agtech field, and his innovative leadership resulted in some of the earliest tech solutions for farmers. For this reason, we are proud that Herdwatch is the new home for Kingswood's great products, dedicated team, and thousands of loyal customers, and look forward to taking them and their legacy to the next level within the Herdwatch platform."

## €15.6m BPS REFUNDS MADE TO FARMERS

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue, recently commenced Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) refund payments of €15.6m to approximately 95,000 farmers. This money was deducted from 2021 BPS payments in line with EU regulations under the Financial Discipline mechanism. Commenting, the minister said: "I am pleased to confirm that these payments are now being reimbursed to eligible farmers. These payments will bring the total paid to Irish farmers under the 2021 Basic Payment Scheme to over €1.18bn."



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# TOP SHEEP FARM FOR IGA TOUR

**THE IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION (IGA) RECENTLY VISTED THE CONNELL FARM IN OFFALY FOR ITS ANNUAL SHEEP EVENT**

**The Connells – Eddie, Bernadette and Aidan – farm 90 hectares (ha) at Clonbullogue, of which 65ha are owned, with the remaining 25 farmed under a partnership agreement.** While most of the farm is devoted to grass production, 15ha are used for tillage crops, which are a feed source for finishing animals on the farm. A 400-strong flock of ewes is the main enterprise, though there is also a substantial bull-beef production enterprise, with up to 150 animals, on average, on the farm at a given time.

## WELL-STRUCTURED FARM

Borris-type ewes make up the main breeding flock, which are essentially Cheviot/Suffolk cross-bred ewes. Historical production from the Connell flock has been excellent with scan figures showing a rate of 1.85 lambs for every ewe put to the rams. A dip in scan rate for the current season is not expected to be replicated. All lambs are finished on the Connell farm with a strong focus on finishing from grass.

To that end, the farm is well structured. The grassland is divided into paddocks with electric fencing and access to water provided at all times. Average paddock size is around 2ha, providing 37 paddocks in total. There is provision to further sub-divide each paddock with temporary electric fencing, as required, along the grazing season. This proves particularly useful during periods of rapid growth as grass runs ahead of consumption, offering opportunities to save forage as well as ensuring that grass quality is optimal at all times to maximise lamb and bull growth rates.

## A GOOD MIX

A notable feature of the Connell farm is the complementary grazing of cattle and sheep. The Connells believe this mixed-grazing strategy significantly improves both grass utilisation and animal performance. A key efficiency result of this is that there has been very little concentrate feeding of lambs to finish. A lot of effort and work goes into flock management around lambing. Triplet lambs are fostered onto single ewes to maximise

milk to lambs as well as minimising the hand rearing of triplets. The time-scale for lamb rearing is well set out. The aim with the spring mid-season flock is to have all lambs weaned by mid-June to coincide with the availability of post-silage after-grass, though this was a greater challenge this year for a period with the widespread early June drought also hitting the Connell farm. The vast majority of the lambs are finished and sold by September. That timescale fits in neatly with the purchase of weanlings for bull beef production. It also frees up grass availability for ewe flushing before mating.

## OUTPUT AND EFFICIENCY

There is ongoing investment in the Connell sheep enterprise. Five years ago, a new sheep shed was built, with the aim of simplifying management around lambing time. A sheep-handling unit is also in place, again with the specific aim of reducing stress and time spent on the various handling operations through the year.

Output and efficiency are the key production indices (KPIs) on the Connell farm with grass as the core feed, both for lamb finishing as well as maximising weight gain on bulls at critical growth periods.

## CELEBRATING IRISH LAMB

**The celebration of Irish lamb production is taken personally in the Comeragh mountains, spanning the Co. Waterford region from near the town of Dungarvan to Clonmel in south Tipperary.**

Every July, local farming traditions and the history, culture, music and food of the mountainous Waterford region are celebrated during the Comeragh's Wild Festival, now in its ninth year.

The festival programme includes sheepdog and sheep-shearing demonstrations and is a significant economic as well as a social boost to the entire Comeragh, Nire Valley and Copper Coast regions that skirt the newly developed and very popular

Waterford Greenway.

The festival organisers have long stepped outside the comfort zone of expected attractions with the inclusion of wellness advocate, Aisling Larkin who, this year, provided a feast for all of the senses at Nell's Farmhouse with well selected food products, all locally sourced. The Waterford native, who is back home and living in the region, dreamt up a novel modern dish featuring crispy Comeragh Lamb from Willie Drohan's nearby flock. Aisling has a clear strategy in her offerings: "The Comeragh's Wild Festival provides a platform to celebrate the incredible flavours and culinary traditions that can be found

right here in our own back garden. By cooking with locally sourced ingredients, we support our local communities and gain a deeper appreciation for the rich tapestry of flavours that nature provides." This year's four-day festival programme also offered opportunities for foraging and forest bathing, woodland crafts, a sunrise walk in the mountains, mindfulness, meditation and yoga, as well as guided hikes, surfing, a celebration of Irish culture and a locally produced docudrama on the final months of the Civil War in the region, to coincide with the 100th anniversary of that seismic and divisive time in Irish history.





Martin Ryan, CEO Mullinahone Co-op, sponsors; Alan Kelly, president of the Irish Grassland Association; Aidan, Bernadette and Eddie Connell, farm hosts.




Willie Drohan,  
Comeragh lamb producer.

### A LAMB FEAST

While Comeragh lamb is the central food theme, the organisers are nothing if not inclusive and eclectic in their culinary offerings, celebrating the very best local produce with a twist. The festival is in constant evolution, as organiser chairwoman Mary Flynn explains: "We regularly add new events to broaden the festival's appeal and there is now a strong emphasis on celebrating and appreciating the flora and fauna of the Comeraghs and helping preserve it for future generations. This is a vast, varied region with magnificent beaches, amazing mountain terrain and some of the best walks, treks and outdoor facilities you'll find anywhere in Europe."





Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Martin Heydon.

# COW REDUCTION SCHEME: 'ANY ACTION WOULD BE VOLUNTARY'

**MINISTER OF STATE AT THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND THE MARINE, MARTIN HEYDON, SPOKE TO BERNIE COMMINS ABOUT THE STATUS OF SHEEPMET EXPORTS TO CHINA AND THE US; ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES; AND A SIGNIFICANT NEW FARM-SAFETY INITIATIVE**

As the minister with responsibility for new market development, Minister Martin Heydon had a positive start to 2023 as the ban on Irish beef imports to China lifted. It came, we all know, after a very long and tedious period of negotiations between Chinese officials and their Irish counterparts at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

"The potential for grass-fed beef was certainly evident to me, when I visited China this year, in the meetings with buyers of beef. They are definitely interested in Ireland but it will take time to rebuild the momentum that we had before we were closed out," he said. Ireland has not yet been approved to export sheepmeat to China, but work is ongoing to change that, he says.

In 2022, Chinese demand for sheepmeat declined, generally, but that trend has seen

somewhat of a reversal. In the first four months of this year, imports of sheepmeat to China increased by about 21 per cent on the same period in 2022, but overall imports are still down. However, the minister is confident that Irish sheepmeat will be on the shelves there soon and it plays into the overall aim of growing our offering in key markets, as well as making inroads to new ones.

"In 2018, we identified a number of priority third market countries for market development. Some were with the aim of getting access, and others were with a view to expanding what we already have there: China, the US, Malaysia, Mexico, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, South Korea would be our eight key markets. And we've seen progress across a number of those markets. Obviously, China is a clear example. Already we are there in a big way with pigmeat and dairy and



beef is now back there. Hopefully we will see sheepmeat there as we're making progress on that."

In September 2021, the DAFM reached agreement with the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) in relation to formal protocols that would pave the way for the export of sheepmeat from Ireland to China. But when will we see this come to fruition? "In May 2023, very useful technical meetings took place with Chinese authorities. My department is putting in place the necessary framework now to facilitate this trade and we will shortly engage with industry [a July meeting] on the details and requirements of industry to export to China.

"We have also been engaging extensively with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) around sheepmeat exports to the US following the agreement on the bilateral health certificate last year. Interested sheepmeat plants can now submit a work programme to my department demonstrating how they will achieve compliance with the US requirements, so we are waiting for our sheepmeat plants to do that now." It is hoped that progress will be made in relation to these markets before the year's end, he said.

"One market might not change the world, but it is the cumulative nature of all these trade deals that gives processors the best possible opportunity to get the best return for every part of the animal," he says.

### €60m WATER-IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Closer to home, the debate on climate change and Irish agriculture's role in that is intensifying as the weeks go by. *Irish Farmers Monthly* spoke to Minister Heydon just after the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published its water-quality report. So how does he think we can marry our climate targets and the demands now placed on farmers in this area, with our agricultural and food-production requirements?

"A significantly enhanced Nitrates Action Programme that was introduced last year had a number of new and broadened measures to drive improvements in water-quality such as observing buffers when spreading slurry, sowing clover to reduce fertiliser use, huge actions on farms that will pay dividends, said Minister Heydon" But the new programme has had limited opportunity to influence

water quality data in that EPA report due to lagging timings between when actions were implemented and their full effect. Many of the actions only became applicable in 2023. We have to be mindful of that." Time, he says is required for the full impact of these actions to be realised. Connected to this, he confirmed that additional measures to enhance water quality will soon be supported through a €60m investment – part of the European Innovation Partnership, aimed at results-based interventions at farm level. "This will see us working with farmers, and empowering them, similar to the model that has worked well through the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme." Details of this new scheme are expected to be announced soon, he said.

### COW REDUCTION

Reports of a dairy-cow reduction scheme that had started to circulate at the time of interviewing the minister, have evolved since then. Latest reports indicate that a Government taskforce has been established to investigate the viability of such a scheme – voluntary, of course – and we have all heard that 200,000 head may be culled over a three-year period to help us meet our climate targets. Nothing has yet been confirmed [at time of print] but Minister Heydon had this to say: "There is no scheme or secret plan to reduce cow numbers, I want to make that clear, there has been a lot of muddying the waters around this. Last October the Food Vision Dairy Group introduced a number of recommendations, and exploring the possibility of a voluntary reduction scheme was one of them, and that is what that group is doing now, looking at the proposal and taking into account all the considerations. "We have always been clear that any action would be voluntary because that is the best way to achieve buy in. It is not unusual for my department or any department to produce modelling of what policy proposals would look like. Any scheme like this would be a serious intervention so it is really important that we know what such an intervention would deliver, what the possible drawbacks of it are, and it would have to be proven that it would be value for money. There is a way to go on this yet, but we will continue to work with the sector."

So what is the timeframe? "There is no

timeframe on this yet because a lot of analysis has to be done – what are the consequences, the drawbacks, is it value for money? The one thing Minister McConologue said is that if there is an intervention, it would be based on last year's cow numbers so no farmer should be making any decisions relating to this now." Questioned on whether he expected a voluntary scheme would be introduced, he said: "I have an open mind on it, I don't know yet."

### FARM SAFETY

As the country's first farm-safety minister, Minister Heydon says he is proud that he has been able to secure a growing budget to invest in this area. This year, he has €2.5m to dedicate to improving farm safety, an increase of €0.3m on last year. Farming is still the most dangerous profession in Ireland and at the time of interviewing, there had been six farm fatalities since the start of 2023.

Just recently, he launched a new National Farm Safety Measure, which will provide a financial contribution to participating farmers covering 60 per cent of the eligible cost of quad bike helmets and power take off (PTO) shaft covers. A total of €1.5m has been allocated to support farmers in the purchase of this equipment.

Additionally, the Farm Safety Capital Investment Scheme under the new Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS 3) is now open. This marks the first time that farm safety investments have their own standalone scheme under TAMS and significantly, the higher grant rate of 60 per cent is available.

"This significant grant rate will make it much more attractive to upgrade the likes of animal handling facilities on farms. Incidents with animals account for the greatest number of non-fatal incidents occurring on farms and proper handling facilities such as cattle crushes, or calving pens can help prevent these incidents from occurring."

There is a wide range of items available under the Farm Safety Scheme including fixed and mobile handling facilities for cattle, sheep, and horses, replacements for agitation points or older slats, safety cages for roofs, upgrades to electric wiring, yard lights, livestock monitors and fertility tags, wheel changing equipment, and silage bale slicer with plastic remover.





# 'WE NEED TIME'

**IRELAND'S 6,700 FARMERS WHO ARE AVAILING OF THE NITRATES DEROGATION WOULD REQUIRE AN ADDITIONAL 30,000 HECTARES OF LAND IF THAT DEROGATION IS REDUCED, MEP BILLY KELLEHER, TOLD THE RECENT 'FINE-TUNING IRISH DAIRY CONFERENCE'. IT WOULD, HE SAID, HAVE SOCIETAL AS WELL AS FARMING IMPLICATIONS, WRITES **BERNIE COMMINS****

The theme of this fifth Fine-Tuning Irish Dairy Conference focused on a 'radical assessment of the future of Irish milk production' and the underlying message of the day was that time is not on the side of the farmers where policy and legislation are concerned.

MEP, Billy Kelleher, who spoke at the event laid out several items currently being discussed and negotiated in the European Union that will impact the farming industry and farmers' livelihood.

And he made the point that before concrete decisions are made with long-term consequences, sufficient time should be allowed to monitor the ways in which farmers' actions to mitigate climate change and enhance water quality are making a difference.

"Traditionally, agricultural policy was looked at through the prism of agriculture, firstly, and then you tried to amend it to lessen the impact on the environment. Most of the flow of legislation and policy is now put through

an environmental prism first and then agriculture is forced into it," he said. "That has been the significant policy shift that has happened in the last 10 years, a lot of it for good reason, but a lot of it will cause significant challenge as well," he said. The MEP said there can be no doubting the degradation of our environmental system across Europe, although it is not all dairy related. But, he said, Ireland's derogation is based on a number of conditions, and water quality is the big issue here. "If we lose that

## EPA REPORT

A few days subsequent to the conference, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published its water quality report for 2022, which found that, overall, there was no significant improvement in the biological quality of our rivers or lakes in 2022. Improvements are happening in some areas but these are offset by declines elsewhere, the report stated. Overall, nitrogen levels in rivers and groundwater increased between 2021 and 2022. Nitrogen is too high in 40 per cent of river sites and in 20 per cent of estuarine and coastal water bodies. In addition, phosphorus levels are too high in 28 per cent of rivers and 36 per cent of lakes. This report will inform the European Commission when it officially reviews Ireland's water quality – in 2023, as part of our derogation – this will be done by comparing EPA water quality results for 2022 with 2021. Where the water quality has not improved, the Commission could reduce the 250kg organic nitrogen per hectare derogation to 220kg organic nitrogen per hectare.



fight, we lose the derogation. The fear and expectation is that the Commission will reduce the 250kg nitrogen to 220kg nitrogen." It is not a foredrawn conclusion, however, he said.

"Time is required for the mitigating factors that we have put in place over the last number of years to have an effect on water quality in rivers and estuaries throughout the country, and that is something we haven't been given, is time to show that there will be a positive impact."

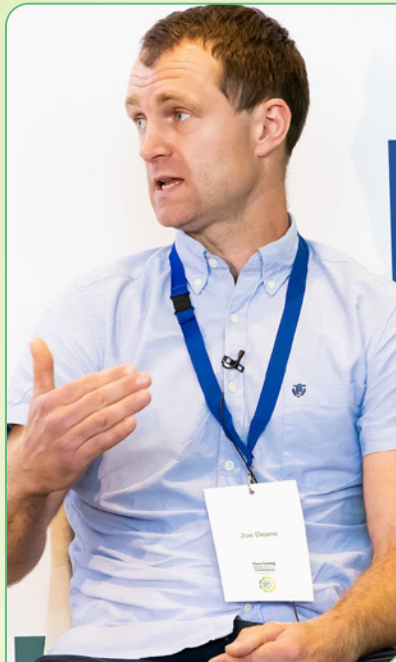
The derogation, if removed, he said will have a massive impact in a number of ways, he explained, such as displacement of agricultural practices. "The dairy farmers will require additional land to maintain their income levels, they will have to procure and rent more and it will be in certain pockets such as west Cork, east Limerick, south Tipperary, south Kilkenny and west Waterford where there is significant concentration of dairy animals and it will displace other farmers in those areas not involved in dairying – beef, tillage, sheep, sucklers, etc. It will have a knock-on societal effect, other than on the farm itself," he said.

### POLICY CERTAINTY

Billy Kelleher added that there needs to be policy certainty so that farmers can plan ahead, otherwise 'you will have this continual rolling of concern, anxiety and uncertainty'. Dairy farmer, Joe Deane, who also spoke at the event, commented on the importance of Government support for the industry's efforts in tackling climate action: "There is great opportunity for dairy farmers in Ireland to run highly profitable and sustainable businesses going forward, once we are



## IF GIVEN MORE TIME, FARMERS CAN CONTINUE TO HELP TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY



Dairy farmer, Joe Deane, speaking at the conference.

not strangled with regulation before new science and technology has the chance to be implemented to combat the challenges facing the industry, such as nitrates and climate change.

"It is very important that the farming organisations and the Government fight hard in Europe for the retention of our derogation

at 250kg nitrogen per hectare. If given more time, farmers can continue to help to improve water quality," he said. He added that Irish farmers are very adaptable and, given the opportunity, will adapt to further improve the sustainability of the industry.

Fellow dairy farmer, Victor O'Sullivan, who spoke at the conference, also stressed the need for joined-up thinking between scientists, farmers and policy makers: "A significant challenge for the future will be maintaining political support regarding the issues of water quality and emissions. The science involved does yield favourable results for Irish dairy farmers; what will have an impact is the political will to back the science."

### ANIMAL TRANSPORT

There is significant risk to the continued transport of animals from Ireland to Europe, the MEP said, so Ireland must go above and beyond when it comes to ensuring and implementing the highest animal-welfare standards possible. "The regulation that governed the transportation of animals – Council Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005 – was implemented in Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and the Nordic countries, but many countries didn't [do that] and we had some appalling cases of animal cruelty," he said.

"We all remember the ships, with 900 steers on board for months, bobbing around from port to port and they couldn't disembark or be slaughtered because there were concerns about bluetongue infections in the animals and nobody would accept responsibility.

"We had cases of heifers being taken from Romania to Kazakhstan, a more-than 2,000km journey and only 50 per cent got there alive. These are the things that cause concern. We are good people, but we will still have to do more to ensure that we have the highest standards because the one country that will be affected most if there is a ban, will be Ireland." It is expected that new animal transport regulations will be published by the European Commission in October, he said.

### INDUSTRIAL EMISSIONS DIRECTIVE - CONCERNING

One piece of European legislation of concern, the MEP highlighted is the Industrial Emissions Directive. This aims to achieve a high level of protection of human health and the environment by reducing harmful industrial emissions across the EU.

"This is also an area of concern," he said. "The European Parliament was already talking about farms of 150 livestock units being included in this directive – this is 110 or 115 cows, plus replacements. The average dairy farm in Ireland has about 92 dairy cows, so just a little over the average would have been included.

"We have tried to change that, so they are now talking about an upper limit of 350 units for dairy and beef farms. I would like that to be higher. We have asked that it wouldn't be stringent in that farms would not be assessed in the same way as waste management facilities or other big industrial sites."



# SOUNDBITES ON THE FUTURE OF IRISH MILK PRODUCTION

THE RECENT 'FINE-TUNING IRISH DAIRY CONFERENCE', WHICH TOOK PLACE IN LITTLE ISLAND IN CORK, EXAMINED THE FUTURE OF IRISH MILK PRODUCTION, AND RAISED MANY ISSUES OF CONCERN AND OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE FOR THE DAIRY SECTOR. PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT WERE KEY ASPECTS OF THE EVENT AND HERE, WE SHARE SOME SOUNDBITES FROM JUST A FEW OF THE PARTICIPANTS OVER THE COURSE OF THE DAY



**EOIN LOWRY, HEAD OF AGRI, BANK OF IRELAND**

"THE WAY WE ASSESS DAIRY FARMS IS CHANGING. ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT, STOCKING RATE, THE QUALITY OF LIVESTOCK, ARE ALL ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED ALONGSIDE THE FINANCIAL METRICS AND THE MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND PLANS OF THE FARMER."



**TJ FLANAGAN, CEO, ICOS**

"WE HAVE, POTENTIALLY, A REAL SUCCESS STORY IN RELATION TO EMISSIONS. WE CAN ACHIEVE AT LEAST 80 PER CENT OF THE REDUCTION TARGETS FOR OUR SECTOR IN A FEW YEARS. SCIENCE IS SUPPORTING US. WE JUST NEED TIME TO IMPLEMENT CHANGE."



**MIKE MAGAN, DAIRY FARMER**

"WE NEED TO FIND WAYS TO SATISFY THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS BEING IMPOSED ON US AND MAKE IT A VIRTUE THAT THE PONDS, HEDGEROWS OR TREE PLANTINGS CREATE A BETTER FOOD PRODUCTION MODEL ON OUR FARMS."



**GERALDINE KEARNEY, DIRECTOR, AUTHENTICITY**

"THE BIOMETHANE PRODUCTION TARGET IS FOR 5.7 TERRAWATT HOURS FROM 200 DIGESTERS BY 2030. WE HAVE THE SCIENCE AND CAPABILITIES TO DELIVER ON THAT. THE PRICE HAS TO BE RIGHT FOR FARMERS TO BE INVOLVED AND I WANT TO SEE FARMERS AT THE CENTRE OF THIS ENERGY INDUSTRY."



**HELENA COUGHLAN, MACRA, AND MILK PRODUCER**

"IT'S WORTH BEARING IN MIND THAT YOUNG IRISH FARMERS ARE THE BEST EDUCATED IN EUROPE. WE HAVE THE CAPABILITY AND WE NEED PEOPLE TO ALLOW US TO GET ON WITH FARMING TO THE VERY HIGHEST STANDARDS."



**DENIS DRENNAN, DEPUTY PRESIDENT, ICMSA**

"WE NEED TO GET CREDIT FOR THE CARBON SEQUESTRATION IN OUR SOILS AND HEDGEROWS AND THE OFFSET VALUE OF THAT, ADDING FURTHER TO THE LOW CARBON FOOTPRINT OF OUR MILK OUTPUT."





**LAURENCE SEXTON, MILK PRODUCER, WEST CORK**

"WE ARE THE BEST CALF PRODUCERS IN THE WORLD MEASURED BY ALL HEALTH PARAMETERS INCLUDING LOW MORTALITY, THRIVE, AND LONGEVITY. THAT'S WHY THERE IS SUCH INTERNATIONAL DEMAND. LIVE EXPORT ROUTES MUST BE KEPT OPEN OR WE WILL BECOME SECOND-CLASS EU FARMERS."



**KARINA PIERCE, PROFESSOR OF DAIRY PRODUCTION, UCD**

"WE REALLY NEED ALL THE GOOD SCIENCE, ALL THE TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION TO BE RAMPED UP AT AN UNPRECEDENTED SPEED AS NEVER SEEN BEFORE. ADVISORS, RESEARCHERS AND, MOST OF ALL, FARMERS MUST BE ENGAGED SO THAT WE CAN SEE RAPID IMPROVEMENTS ON OUR ENVIRONMENTAL CREDENTIALS."



**VICTOR O'SULLIVAN, PEDIGREE HOLSTEIN BREEDER**

"COW FERTILITY HAS BEEN A HUGE FOCUS IN RECENT YEARS. LONGEVITY IS IMPORTANT TO MINIMISE REPLACEMENT DEMAND AND INCREASE OVERALL PROFITABILITY. THERE ARE NOW GREAT BREEDING TOOLS TO HELP CHANGE AND ADAPT QUICKLY."



**JOHN O'BRIEN, MILK PRODUCER, BARRYROE**

"IRISH DAIRY HAS BEEN REVOLUTIONISED BY BREEDING TECHNOLOGY THROUGH ICBF AND EBI AND WE NEED TO MAXIMISE THE BENEFITS OF THAT."



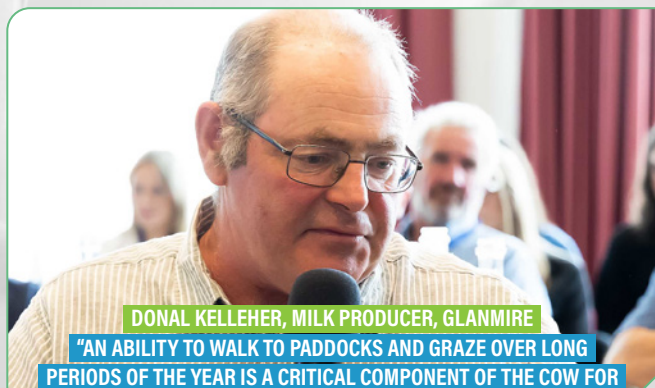
**BREDA KEANE, KILMACTHOMAS**

"WE ARE GETTING SUCH LITTLE RECOGNITION FOR THE INCREASED SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS DAIRY FARMERS HAVE ACHIEVED. WE SHOULD ALSO BE CONCERNED AT THE LOW NUMBERS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENTERING THE DAIRY SECTOR."



**ZOË KAVANAGH, CEO, NATIONAL DAIRY COUNCIL**

"IRELAND DOES DAIRY BETTER THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD."



**DONAL KELLEHER, MILK PRODUCER, GLANMIRE**

"AN ABILITY TO WALK TO PADDOCKS AND GRAZE OVER LONG PERIODS OF THE YEAR IS A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF THE COW FOR THE FUTURE. GOOD FEET AND MOBILITY ARE ESSENTIAL."



**JOHN MURPHY, DRIPSEY, CO. CORK**

"WITH THE TIGHTENING OF THE DEROGATION AND COW BANDING, LAND RENTALS HAVE INCREASED EXPLOSIVELY BECAUSE DAIRY FARMERS NEED EXTRA LAND TO MAINTAIN COW NUMBERS. THE CONSEQUENCES ARE SERIOUS FOR THE TILLAGE FARMER. THIS IS A SERIOUS ISSUE FOR THE ENTIRE STRUCTURE OF IRISH AGRICULTURE."





# 'WE WILL NOT BE BEATEN BY A LESSER STORY TOLD BETTER'

**CEO OF ALLTECH, DR MARK LYONS, PROVIDED A POSITIVE INSIGHT INTO WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION WHEN HE ADDRESSED ATTENDEES AT THE DUBLIN LEG OF THE ALLTECH ONE CONFERENCE, WHICH TOOK PLACE RECENTLY IN CROKE PARK**

Addressing the nature of agriculture, he said: "We operate in a very complex system. Having said that, we have to ensure that we communicate in a simplified manner. This is really one of the biggest challenges." And an adage that Mark ascribed to a company colleague is worth repeating: "We will not be beaten by a lesser story told better." And the story of agriculture is phenomenal, he said. "Sometimes, we do not tell it as well as we should. We cannot afford to be segmented or divided. We may trade between sectors but at the same time we need to work as one entity to the betterment of our industry. We have tradition and we have been tremendously resilient as a great community."

## THE SCIENCE OF SOIL

There is a recurring theme in agriculture, he said: "The science of soil proves its carbon-capture nature. How we utilise that system to draw carbon down from the atmosphere and store it will be one of the biggest opportunities for agriculture in the coming years.

"The value of that carbon cycle must be leveraged to our benefit. The message we need to get out there is that we capture more carbon with our animals on the land. This fact is what will help us preserve our livestock farming system in the future."

## THE NUTRITION MESSAGES

Highlighting the importance of nutrition, he

said: "Eight hundred million people worldwide are hungry every day. One in 10 people on this planet is undernourished. One in four is malnourished. That's two billion people, worldwide. They are staggering numbers. We know more about animal nutrition than we do about human nutrition.

"How do we overcome this knowledge deficit and how does the world see animal agriculture as an answer to the challenges of human nutrition? Poor nutrition is the single biggest threat to human health. We look at the size of the pharmaceutical industry and how much money is devoted to it, when the solution to so many of our health challenges is our own nutrition."

## THE ALLTECH APPROACH

Replenishing the planet and providing nutrition for all was a major theme as Mark reflected on his travels across the globe: "We can only do it by working together. We also



have to understand that we have different challenges in different parts of the world. In some places it is simply about having enough food, that basic calorific requirement to prevent starvation. In other places, food is starting to become something very different. It is part of people's identity, an aspect of the kind of person one is as an individual human being. That is when the added-value aspect becomes the dominant driver.

"Our entire economy is built on fossil fuels. We have to come up with ways, not just to reduce our use of fossil fuels, but also to act on the types of restorative environmental actions that we must take. We have to be pulling carbon out of the atmosphere if we are to overcome the climate challenges facing us."

He claimed that many people are making self-interested decisions. "Because of that, we do not have, today, in our system, an ability to nourish our planet in the the way we should,"

he said. Farmers need to be given ownership and empowered to take charge of creating sustainable food systems. They must be provided with the tools they need to take the right actions."

That ownership of change was referenced by EU Commissioner Mairead McGuinness in an earlier presentation when she said: "I have never met a farmer who wanted to destroy the environment. They live by it."

### A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Mark adopted an optimistic view of the future: "We are living in an extraordinary moment and what a tremendous opportunity is before us," he said. "We have a chance to leave our legacies, most especially in the manner in which we manage sustainability and climate challenges. Agriculture is central to that legacy development. We have the ability and scale to change and we are making tremendous progress."

## THE BROKEN FOOD SYSTEM

Dr Hans Jöhr, a former corporate head of agriculture with Nestlé, delivered some thought-provoking insights on the inequalities of margin distribution, at the Alltech ONE conference. Speaking about the Calabrian red onion, a vegetable unique to the Italian region, he dissected the margin on a kilogramme of red onions from the producer to the consumer. The producer price delivered at the cooperative gate is €0.15/kg. In turn, the cooperative price to the trade is €0.30/kg, a doubling of the producer price, reflecting various costs including storage, warehousing, packing and transport to sale. The consumer price, however, is where the mark-up is truly astounding, especially given the fact that there are no intensive processing costs involved. At more than 50 times the price the producer receives, one kilogramme of Calabrian red onions is €7.80. While the figures may seem astounding, they are not out of kilter with many of the mark-ups across food items, not only in Italy but more generally across the world.

Dr Jöhr provided two more examples. The difference in the price of high-value wine between what the producer receives for growing the vine, harvesting the grapes, crushing, pressing, fermentation, clarification, and then ageing and bottling, and what the consumer pays is often remarkable. The selling price for top-class wine at

the winery, sold as a six-pack, was €6 per bottle. As a gift box, the six-pack could fetch €18.50 per bottle. The consumer price in a restaurant was €95 per bottle.

Not content with those examples, he provided a third example of what he described as 'the broken food system'. He traced a cup of coffee from the production of the basic ingredients to the supermarket sale point. A cup of cappuccino in a French supermarket costs an average €2.35. Sixty per cent of the price reverts to the supermarket with the milk, coffee, cocoa and sugar producers receiving a total of less than eight percent of the consumer price, between them.

There are, of course, costs along the way, transport, grading, storage, percolation etc.. But those costs cannot justify the fact that out of a €2.35 cup of coffee, the entire remuneration to the principal producers of the basic ingredients – milk, coffee, cocoa and sugar – is less than 20c. In summary, the breakdown of costs shows that the supermarket received 66 per cent of the total cappuccino price paid by the consumer, with the ingredient suppliers and various fabricators of the end product receiving 34 per cent of the end price. The figures provided a sobering take-home message from the Alltech ONE conference.





# MAXIMISING SUMMER FEED UTILISATION



**DR MJ DORAN - INTOUCH FEEDING SPECIALIST, ALLTECH IRELAND - EXPLAINS HOW FARMERS CAN REDUCE FEED COSTS AND IMPROVE SUMMER GRASS AND WINTER SILAGE UTILISATION THROUGH APPROPRIATE GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT AND BY GETTING THE SILAGE-MAKING PROCESS CORRECT**

Global food production systems have experienced some unprecedented challenges during the past 18 months. Irish farmers have faced many adversities, including extremely volatile consumer markets, extraordinary climate change-related weather events, and record increases in production costs. These increases in farmgate production costs can be partly attributed to imported feed cost inflation. The vast majority of animal feed production on Irish farms is grass-based; typically, grazed grass (€0.121/kg dry matter [DM]) and silage production (€0.204/kg DM)

costs on pasture-based farms comprise most total variable costs. Since these costs have increased considerably, it is imperative to fully utilise this feed source. Major input costs to producing good-quality grazed grass and silage in Ireland include fuel, electricity, contractor charges and nitrogen (N) fertiliser. Irish farmers have demonstrated their resilience and commitment to Ireland's climate change targets through reducing dependency on chemical N fertiliser usage. Preliminary statistics from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine show a 55.9 per cent

decrease in sales of N fertiliser in the period between October 2022 and April 2023, when compared with the same period for the previous year. Even with this reduction, farmers can reduce feed costs and improve summer grass and winter silage utilisation through: appropriate grassland management; and getting the silage-making process correct.

**GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT**

Good grassland management usually forms the cornerstone of any grazing system, and it is a simple process, though it is often overthought and overcomplicated. A grazing farm should set out these targets:

- ▶ Extend the grazing season from early spring into late autumn where possible.
- ▶ Ensure that the calving/lambing pattern of your herds/flocks coincides with the onset of the growing season.

Table 1: Grassland management targets. Source: Teagasc

Month	Stocking rate (on grazing area) (LU/ha)	Growth (kg DM/day)	Target average farm cover (kg DM/ha)	Target cover per cow (kg DM/cow)	Event
Feb 15	2.5	9.0	661	264	Cows out to grass by day
Mar 15	2.6	37.6	880	342	Cows out full-time
May 10	4.2	88.2	800	190	Supply exceeds demand
From June to August, farm cover should be maintained at 150-170kg DM per cow					
Aug 15	2.5	65.0	775	310	
Sept 1	2.5	51.0	1100	440	
Sept 15	2.5	37.1	1125	450	Peak cover achieved
Oct 1	2.5	30.0	1075	430	
Oct 15	2.5	26.8	950	380	First paddock closed
Nov 1	2.5	15.0	700	280	Supplement introduced
Nov 15	2.5	8.5	600	240	
Nov 22	2.5	2.7	550	220	House by day and night





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- Ensure that good grazing infrastructure is in place.
- Use appropriate grassland management decision support software, such as PastureBase.

Table 1 sets out grassland management targets for a milk production system over a typical grazing season.

In an ideal scenario, June through August is a time when Irish farmers can operate in cruise control, maintaining a low cover/cow in line with normal-to-high growth rates. Rotation length should be maintained at 18-21 days, but this will depend on growth rate. For example, where growth rate is 60kg DM/hectare (ha)/day and target pre-grazing yield is 1,300kg DM/ha, target rotation length = target pre-grazing yield (1,300)/current growth rate (60) = 21.7 or 22 days. Target pre-grazing yield should range from 1,200 to 1,500kg DM/ha, while target graze-out height should range from 4-4.5cm. In a milk production system where cows graze, if cover/cow is above the threshold of 190kg DM and growth rates are high, surpluses should be removed almost immediately to bring this grazing land area back into the grazing rotation. Using a mixture of early-, mid- and late-heading grass cultivars in seed mixes will provide a more even spread of high-quality feed to livestock over the grazing season.

Recent University College Dublin research has highlighted the importance of grazing multispecies swards. Aside from the ability of species-diverse swards to produce herbage under restricted artificial N fertiliser scenarios, they are more drought-tolerant and more capable of sustaining high growth rates during drought periods when compared with perennial ryegrass-dominant grazing swards. Some farmers will pre-mow enough grass to feed cows for up to 24 hours, maximising utilisation of pasture during periods of high growth rates. Zero-grazing is also an option to make the best use of grass grown on land blocks that are inaccessible to the herd. However, grass should only be zero-grazed from swards that were previously topped or mechanically worked to maximise palatability and thus utilisation. Zero-grazed grass should have similar pre-grazing yields to that of

**Table 2: Effect of silage quality on daily weight gain and feed efficiency in growing cattle.** Source: Teagasc

DMD	75	70	65	60
Harvest date	20 <sup>th</sup> May	2 <sup>nd</sup> June	15 <sup>th</sup> June	28 <sup>th</sup> June
Silage yield (t DM/ha)	4.8	6.0	7.0	7.7
Daily live weight gain (kg)	0.83	0.66	0.49	0.31
Feed efficiency (DMI/kg carcass gain)	17.6	21.1	28.1	46.7

grazed swards (1,200-1,500kg DM/ha). At times when seed head is being produced and pre-grazing covers are greater than 1,500kg DM/ha, cows should not be forced to graze out to 4cm, as this will reduce milk production. Cutting losses, grazing to 5-6cm (bearing in mind that 1 cm = 250kg DM/ha) and topping is advised here so that grass quality is not impacted in the following grazing rotation.

### THE SILAGE-MAKING PROCESS

Silage-making is an important process, and results will determine:

1. How well homegrown feed will be utilised in terms of winter animal performance (Table 2); and
2. What level of imported concentrates will be required.

Second and third-cut silage-making is well underway at this stage in July. Once this is completed, farmers should bring silage ground back into the grazing rotation, thus extending rotation length.

While Table 2 applies to earlier-cut silage, the principle that letting silage crops 'bulk out' will undermine animal performance still applies to second- and third-cut silage. The success of the silage-making process can be influenced by several factors:

- Nutrient management.
- Grass varieties.
- Weed control.
- Cutting date.
- Ensiling process.

**Nutrient management:** For best-quality silage, apply the correct amounts of macronutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) at least six weeks before the planned cutting date.

**Grass varieties:** When reseeding silage ground, it is important that tetraploid grass varieties predominate the grass seed mix.

This information will be given on the seed label.

**Weed control:** For the herbicide to work, docks, nettles, thistles, etc., should be sprayed in the springtime, when weeds are growing rapidly with leaf cover available.

**Cutting date:** It is also important to bear in mind cutting date, as this can determine dry matter digestibility (DMD) of the crop. Every farmer's silage crop will be greater than 75 per cent DMD at some stage. The DMD content will decrease by two to three percentage units per week from the second half of May, mainly due to the increasing stem proportion in the plant. The same applies for second-cut silage in late June and early July.

**Ensiling process:** This can have a huge effect on silage quality. Maintaining low grass nitrate and high sugar readings is key for the fermentation process to work effectively and for silage pH levels to decrease as quickly as possible. A silage additive such as Egalis will help speed up the fermentation process where all other good silage-making practices have been completed. These include:

- Cutting grass when sugars are high (>3 per cent on Brix refractometer) and nitrates are low (<600 parts per million).
- Keeping the crop dry (27-30 per cent DM).
- Achieving adequate compaction in the pit/baler.
- Ensuring that the silage wrap/plastic remains intact so that no air gets through.
- Protecting plastic from birds and other vermin with nets, covers, etc.

All of the aforementioned practices will also aid in the feeding-out process.

Additional helpful tips to minimise waste include: feeding out enough silage for a maximum of 24 hours in warm weather, moving across the pit face in 48-72 hours, and regularly cleaning refusals away from the feed passage.



# FOCUS

A herd of black and white cows is grazing in a lush green field. The background features a dense line of evergreen trees and distant mountains under a warm, orange-hued sky, suggesting a sunset or sunrise scene.

ANIMAL HEALTH



# CONSIDERATIONS FOR OPTIMAL ANIMAL HEALTH

OPTIMAL ANIMAL HEALTH IS ACHIEVED BY HAVING AN EVOLVING ANIMAL-HEALTH PLAN, A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR LOCAL VET, AND A PREVENTION-IS-BETTER-THAN-CURE ATTITUDE, VET, DONAL LYNCH TELLS **BERNIE COMMINS**. HERE, HE OUTLINES SOME ANIMAL-HEALTH ESSENTIALS TO FOCUS ON



**"Now is a great time to plan for the future months, and focus on a number of things such as parasite control, mastitis control, pneumonia control, and fertility," says Donal, who espouses a holistic approach to general animal health on the farm.**

**"One disease should never be looked at independently of another," he says.**

Parasite control, particularly in relation to first-grazing animals is something to home in on as now is the time when they are, potentially, exposed to stomach and intestinal worms, also known as gut worms; lungworms; and liver fluke. While certain diagnostic tools are important, Donal says, so too is paying attention to the general condition of the animal.

Faecal egg counting is a 'very useful diagnostic tool and does help inform dosing decisions' but it is important to bear in mind that faecal egg counts are not as reliable in cattle as they are in sheep, according to Donal. "So, while a positive and a high worm egg count is very significant, a zero-egg count [in cattle] cannot be looked at in isolation without also looking at the clinical picture of the animal – that is, how the animal is performing and what it looks like," Donal explains. Dung-sample tests, while also very useful, can return unreliable data, he says. Where dung sampling is carried out, particular attention must be paid to the condition of the animal, especially in relation to the detection of lungworms, rather than stomach or gut worms. "And the number-one sign that you need to be looking for here is coughing," Donal explains.

## SIGNS

"When you go out to feed your dairy calves, they will run up to the trough, and if they start coughing when they are running, that is the earliest sign that we are going to see a lungworm," he says.

Regarding gut worms, the most typical sign



of these is scour or diarrhoea, but also lack of thrive. He explains: "We would be expecting dairy calves to be putting on something in the order of .6kg per day – obviously that depends on the genetics of the cow. Your Holstein-Friesian would be aiming for a higher target weight than cross breeds, for example, and depending on the breed of suckler calves, we would be expecting a higher weight gain, per day. So, if we are not achieving that, we should be investigating it," he says.

### Coccidiosis

Lack of thrive can also be attributed to coccidiosis, which, typically, occurs in housed animals. But, more frequently, Donal says, vets are seeing isolated cases of it in grazing animals of all ages, but particularly first-grazing animals.

### MINERAL ISSUES

Mineral deficiency, too, can contribute to lack of thrive at this time of the year when animals are out on grass, says Donal. Knowledge of your grass composition is crucial, and knowledge of deficiencies, equally so. Mineral deficiencies are caused by various things: geography, soil pH, the season, and so on. Copper deficiency is very common in Ireland, says Donal: "This can be made worse by antagonists of copper such as molybdenum, which is the most common one that we would be aware of." This reduces absorption and utilisation of copper by the animal.

"Animals normally get their minerals from what they are eating, so a newborn calf, for example, is predominantly getting its minerals from milk, and as it gets older, it will start taking them from the forage or the grass they are eating, or whatever concentrate feeds they are eating.

"Depending on the part of the country you are in, the amount of minerals that are included in concentrate feeds might not be sufficient to feed the animal's requirements. As vets and farmers, we know, in a particular [geographical] area, what we need to supplement. If that information isn't available – if it is a new farm or there are new management practices – taking some blood samples to monitor mineral levels is a very good starting point," he says. Different forms of supplementation can be introduced in the event of copper deficiency,

such as: concentrates; mineral drenches, which would be, typically, shorter-acting; mineral boluses, which would be longer-acting, lasting over a number of months and releasing a small amount of the mineral over the day. "These would probably be my preference, as they are the most reliable way of delivering minerals to animals," says Donal.

### WATER

Issues involving high levels of sulphur and iron are also of concern, Donal says, and there are telltale signs, in water, for the presence of both. "Typically, if you look at your drinking troughs, and if there are red and rusty stains, that tells you that you have high iron levels, which are likely to lead to problems. If you have high iron here, it is a good indication that you will have high iron levels in grass and silage also."

The best physical indicator of sulphur is a smell, Donal says. "Water with a high sulphur content smells bad, like rotten eggs. So we can look at water and forage samples for mineral levels and address them accordingly."

### LOOKING AHEAD


Farmers have a wonderful opportunity now to plan for the months ahead, particularly in relation to housing and disease prevention, says Donal. And the main disease of concern here is pneumonia.

"Predominantly, that comes down to planning – how to manage the animals before they go into the shed and when they go into the shed, and also planning any changes to the sheds themselves.


"Ventilation is the biggest thing, we want to ensure that we have an adequate outlet and inlet for air movement in sheds. We all

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**VACCINATING FOR BVD HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT NOW. WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT WE CONTROL ANY RISK OF SPREAD FROM THE SMALL NUMBER OF CASES THAT WE ARE SEEING AND THAT SHOULD BE DONE BY VACCINATION**

remember when we were trying to control the spread of Covid-19 in the human population, it was all about opening windows and ensuring there was ventilation and fresh air; well, it is exactly the same with cattle. If we can get better air movement in sheds, we would have far fewer problems with pneumonia."

#### PREPARING THE ANIMALS

Donal, again, refers back to the management and treatment of Covid-19 when discussing how best to prepare animals for housing. Vaccination is the common denominator here, and now is the time to implement such a programme for your animals.

"If you are planning a vaccination programme, you should be starting it during the summer," Donal says. Most vaccines work on the basis of a primary course followed by booster vaccinations – they require time to administer and become effective. Donal explains: "A typical vaccine – and there are variations of this – but a typical vaccine involves an injection now, followed by another one a month later, and then six-monthly, or annual boosters, after that. So, for example, I would be aiming to give the first injection in mid-July, then another in the middle of August and from then on, I have six months' protection, depending on the vaccine, which is going to get me well over the housing period."

#### TWO BIRDS

As discussed earlier, now is parasite-control time, so when the animals are in for their worm treatments, they should get their vaccinations, too. "From a management point of view, the cattle are in to be handled, and so you would try to get as many things as you can covered on the same day," says Donal.

#### BVD ERADICATION

In April this year, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue confirmed the emergence of a small number of local clusters of bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) infection, thought to have been spread between herds as a result of movement of animals, equipment and people. Subsequent reports indicated that, in 2023, the number of persistently infected (PI) calves had increased by about 20 per cent on 2022 levels. This may lead to continuation of the BVD Eradication Programme into 2024, despite hopes that this would be its final year. Donal explains that vaccination against BVD has never been more important.

"BVD survives in a population because of a carrier animal, or infected animals. In Ireland, we have done quite a good job of reducing the number of these but why, then, are we still seeing problems?

"When a disease is circulating within a herd, a

certain amount of natural immunity develops. But when we don't have BVD circulating within the herd, we don't have any of this natural protection. If an animal comes into contact with the virus, then the whole herd is naive and it can become a big problem.

"Vaccinating for BVD has never been more important now. We want to make sure that we control any risk of spread from the small number of cases that we are seeing and that should be done by vaccination," he says. A perception that vaccination is less important now is misguided.

And when is the best time to vaccinate? Donal explains: "BVD is spread by pregnant animals, that is a real risk period, so the ideal situation is that you vaccinate your breeding animals before breeding. There are two vaccines on the market, so you need to follow the guidelines for whichever one you are using." Good housing management can also make a positive impact here, Donal says.

#### SCC MASTITIS

The latest Animal Health Ireland newsletter suggests that now is a good time to review herd performance in terms of animals' somatic cell count. Donal advises dairy farmers to concentrate their milk recordings – ideally six in the year – on early lactation and late lactation but he agrees that now –



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mid lactation – is a good time to address any problems that exist in the herd so that drying off in the autumn will be straightforward.

"Mastitis and cell counts are some of the biggest drivers of profitability on farms and producing quality, safe food in a sustainable way. Typically, in Ireland we will dry off from October, into November or December and the cows are dried off for the two-month period to allow then to recoup, recover and prepare for having their calf and produce milk.

"Part of that involves controlling any underlying mastitis agents or pathogens that are in the herd at this stage. So, when we are looking now at any case of clinical mastitis we get, we want to identify, number one, what bacteria are causing the problem, and number two, what antibiotics would be best to treat it if there is a clinical case. Or, if we need to use treatment during the dry-cow period what is most appropriate on individual farms to control the specific problems they have."

No longer is blanket dry-cow therapy practised so it hugely important to sustain the antibiotics that we have available to us, Donal says. "Prudent use of antibiotics is hugely important, it is all about using the right antibiotics, in the right amount, for the right amount of time," he says. Mastitis management can be enhanced by ensuring that the milking machine has been serviced and is working properly, also.

### Animal health plan

An animal-health plan is ever changing, Donal says: "Sure, the basics and benchmarks are in place but from year to year that plan must be revised and must be adaptable."

### WEATHER FOR WORMS

This summer's extreme weather conditions have created optimal conditions for worms to develop and multiply more rapidly than normal, Donal says. "Following on from the warm weather and the rain we have had over the last few weeks, I am expecting that we will see problems with worms (in mid-July) as parasites thrive in these conditions.

"Worms would become an issue in sheep slightly earlier than they would in cattle and we have certainly been seeing the worm egg count in lambs, through dung sampling, climbing and we are putting interventions

in place in sooner this year," Donal says. This year has also seen an increase in the incidence of blowfly strike in sheep, too – not just in unshorn, upland animals.

### Blowfly in dogs

Although a rare occurrence, Donal warns of the potential for the blowfly to strike on dogs if the conditions are right. "Typically, dogs that are very hairy, old, maybe not moving around as much, and might be wet, can attract the blowfly. If the environment is suitable, the maggots will develop on them," he says.

### FERTILITY REVIEW

Now is a suitable time to check herd fertility results and scans to see how the breeding season has gone on both dairy and suckler farms. "If it hasn't gone as well as we would have liked, now is the time to investigate why that is the case," Donal says.

"Frequently, in November and December we end up finding out that within the herd, there might be 15-20 per cent empties where the target would be somewhere around five per

cent. Any diagnostic testing at that stage is somewhat limited because the problem has become a historical problem.

"If we investigate now, it allows the possibility of an intervention, perhaps to get in another breeding be it with AI or a stock bull. But investigating the problem much closer to the time that arises is far better than trying to investigate the problem down the road."

### KEY PILLARS

There are four pillars of fertility: genetics, nutrition, management, and disease.

"Genetics creates the potential, management realises the potential – nutrition comes in under this – and disease can destroy that potential," Donal explains.

"We want to breed animals that are fertile; management involves getting cows right, getting heat detection right, using proper AI techniques, managing your stock bull; nutrition is all about having breeding cows in a positive energy balance – taking in more than they are putting out.

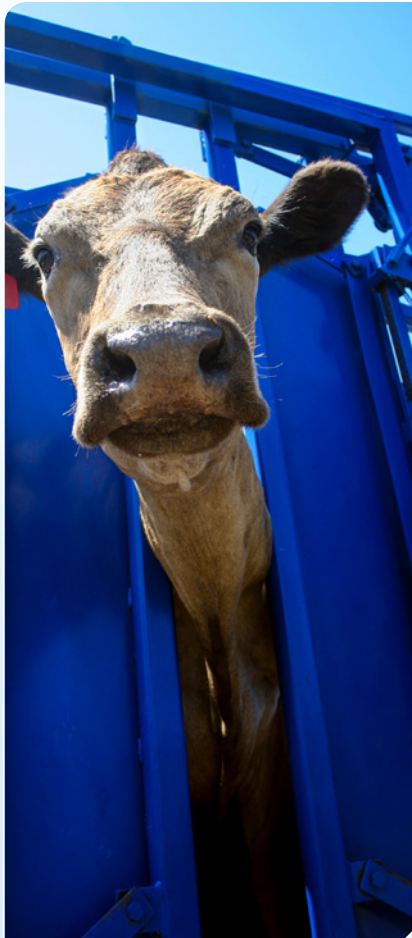
"Infectious diseases such as BVD, leptospirosis, IBR, any number of infectious diseases will adversely affect fertility. And any diseases that impacts temperature, for example, means a cow is less likely to be in calf."

### RELATIONSHIP WITH VET

The importance of developing and maintaining a good relationship with your vet is emphasised by Donal. "The vet understands your farm and animals and can implement the preventative strategies and disease management required. While prevention is better than cure, absolutely as vets one of our biggest things is to be available to treat sick animals as required and we are proud that we are the only profession to provide an independent 24-hour service."

### Heat exhaustion – farm dogs

Donal advises caution around dogs working in extreme hot and humid conditions: "Sheepdogs, for example, are typically a darker colour and are more susceptible to heat exasution. So, farmers need to remember to ensure that working dogs get a break, and have supplies of fresh water throughout the day, and shade in which to shelter from the sun."





# FOSTERING COLLABORATION, ENHANCING ANIMAL HEALTH

**THE EIGHTH EUROPEAN VETERINARY IMMUNOLOGY WORKSHOP (EVIW) TAKES PLACE IN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN NEXT AUGUST AND THE FOCUS WILL BE ON TRAINING STUDENTS AND YOUNG RESEARCHERS TO ENABLE REAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER OF THE LATEST RESEARCH TO ENHANCE ANIMAL HEALTH**



Kieran Meade, associate professor in immunobiology, School of Agriculture and Food Science at UCD.

Kieran Meade, associate professor in immunobiology in the school of Agriculture and Food Science at UCD is the chair of the organising committee for the conference. He spoke to *Irish Farmers Monthly* about the conference's aims and objectives.

"The EVIW is organised by the European Veterinary Immunology Group – a dedicated group that aims to showcase the latest in immunology research in livestock. The last event was held online due to Covid-19 restrictions, so there has been a latent interest building for an in-person event where networks and connections can be built. We can showcase what is happening across Ireland to both a European and international audience. The conference theme is 'working together', across continents, across specialties, across infectious agents and across species."

The conference, he says, is an important opportunity not only to share research but also to network and build relationships and encourage collaboration. "Nurturing new partnerships, and stimulating innovation across disciplines, is critical to solving the serious problems we have, like antimicrobial

resistance (AMR) and risk of zoonotic diseases." Research shows us that 60 per cent of infectious diseases are caused by agents that are zoonotic in nature and these infections can move between species. "Prior to Covid-19, we were making the case that we need more investment to drive surveillance of infections at source. Post Covid-19, this is an easier sell, as there is a renewed focus on trying to control infectious diseases, not only in agriculture, but also in

wildlife to secure the wider food chain and protect human health. The risk is that, without urgent focus, these issues will get worse as we try to feed a growing global population," he says.

The EVIW conference will precede the European Congress on Immunology also being held in Dublin and will include guest speakers to continue the theme of learning across species. "We are running the conference immediately prior to the European Immunology Conference – this is important as we know in veterinary medicine we need to move away from reactive mode and into prevention mode and to do this we need to understand the immune system in much

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more detail. A large emphasis will be on vaccination for example, but there are lots of diseases for which we don't have effective vaccines, so we need to get more investment, more partnerships and a better realisation of the urgency of the situation. EVIW will help to build that momentum."

Some of the topics that will be covered at the EVIW include tick and parasite immunity; how immunology can help avert future diseases; tuberculosis; and the microbiome. "The vast majority of what we know about how the immune system works comes from humans and mice, but livestock have evolved important differences and identifying these is key to the design of successful strategies for disease prevention, and that is why this conference is so important. Eight animal species supply 90 per cent of the world's food – this conference is about better understanding the immune systems in those principal livestock species," Kieran says.

### ONE HEALTH

The conference is also an opportunity to platform younger researchers and PhD students, Kieran explains: "Our new MSc in Animal Science at UCD has modules in animal and One Health, and the purpose is to generate the future leaders who will champion One Health."

Led by the World Health Organization, 'One Health' is an integrated, unifying approach to optimise the health of people, animals and

the environment. It is particularly important to prevent, predict, and respond appropriately to global health threats such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We are all part of a connected ecosystem; we know that now since Covid-19 and so the One Health agenda is critical. We need to break down silos between animal and human health and encourage a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach. Industry also plays an important part in this – animal nutrition and health companies now realise the importance of building multi-disciplinary teams for success.

"The future is One Health and that means that we need to build closer relationships and collaboration between farmers, animal scientists, veterinarians and other disciplines. This is an exciting opportunity for our graduates to shape the future of agriculture, secure the food chain and protect human health."

The EVIW Conference is expected to attract people involved in animal health, animal health policy and disease control, researchers, vets, and industry. "It will be a flexible format with day passes so that practising vets can interact with disease experts and focus on their particular areas of interests, for example one of the topics will be on eradication of bovine tuberculosis and we will have leading international experts in this field speaking as well as our own government officials shaping eradication policy."

### CONFERENCE TOPICS

- ▶ Futurescoping – how immunology can help avert future diseases
- ▶ Tuberculosis and One Health
- ▶ Vaccines for the future
- ▶ Veterinary Immunology toolkit
- ▶ Systems immunology
- ▶ Mucosal immunology
- ▶ Genetics and epigenetics of the immune system
- ▶ Translational veterinary immunology
- ▶ Tick and parasite immunity
- ▶ Fish immunology
- ▶ Avian immunology
- ▶ Horse immunology
- ▶ Virology/Parasitology/Pathology
- ▶ Companion animal immunology
- ▶ Wildlife immunology
- ▶ The educational landscape in veterinary immunology

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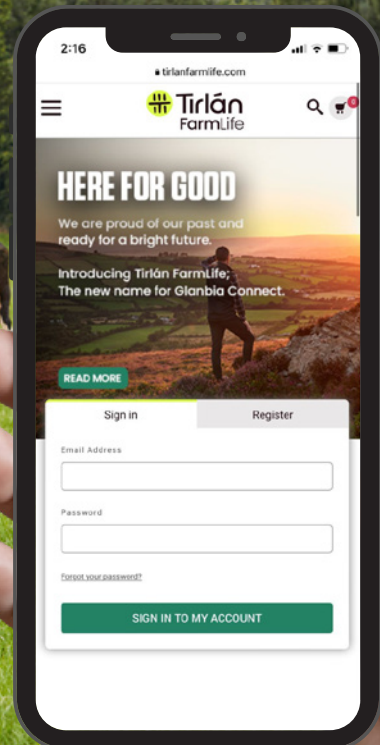


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# IMPORTANCE OF PROLONGING ANTHELMINTIC EFFECTIVENESS

**THERE'S NOTHING NEW ABOUT LEVAMISOLE, IN FACT IT IS ONE OF THE OLDER WORMER MOLECULES. BUT AS WE BECOME MORE AWARE OF WORMER RESISTANCE HERE IN IRELAND, IT'S WORTH CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVES TO SOME OF THE NEWER ACTIVES TO ENSURE WE PROLONG THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ALL ANTHELMINTIC CLASSES, WRITES MAURA LANGAN, NORBROOK TECHNICAL ADVISOR**

## WHAT IS LEVAMISOLE?

Levamisole, sometimes known as 'yellow drench', has a broad spectrum of anthelmintic activity against mature and developing immature stages of gastrointestinal worms and lungworm in cattle and sheep.

## RIGHT TIME, RIGHT PRODUCT, RIGHT ANIMAL

There are three classes of anthelmintics licensed for the treatment of stomach and lungworm in cattle in Ireland: benzimidazoles (white); imidazothiazole (yellow); and macrocyclic lactones (clear). Levamisole is the only member of the

imidazothiazole group of anthelmintics licensed in Ireland and offers an alternative to benzimidazoles and macrocyclic lactones. Alternative options are important, given that a number of Irish studies are showing evidence of resistance amongst the main species of cattle gut worms. Where anthelmintic resistance is suspected, your vet will be able to test for effectiveness and prescribe alternative treatments.

There are many risk factors for anthelmintic resistance. The best way of limiting selection pressure on worm populations is to avoid treating cattle unnecessarily and to always ensure the correct drug and dose are used.

It is important to understand that each of the wormer classes has different characteristics and that will influence whether they are the right choice for your farm.

## RESPONSIBLE PARASITE CONTROL IN YOUNG CATTLE

Levamisole can play a useful role in devising season-long, parasite control-management strategies for different management groups. Young stock at grass are completely naive to gut and lungworm infections. As they graze, they are exposed to both gut and lungworm, acquiring low-level burdens that complete their lifecycle in the animal before the adult



worms then contaminate the pasture with eggs. The rate at which immunity develops is dependent on the level of exposure to infective larvae. By the second grazing season, they will have acquired some immunity and will be better able to tolerate a low worm burden.

Achieving a balance between allowing enough exposure to stimulate protective immunity, but not so much as to cause pathogenic burdens of worms is critical to sustainable worm control. The judicious use of the right anthelmintic treatment at the correct time can reduce potential production losses.

However, if calves have no exposure at all to pasture or are over-protected in their first grazing season (as may occur following the use and/or repeated use of persistent wormers), they may fail to develop sufficient immunity to give necessary protection throughout their adult life.

Levamisole has no persistency, so may be a suitable initial grazing treatment, or 'primer dose' that allows immunity to develop following exposure to gut worms early in the season.

Levamisole can be prescribed before or after other wormer classes throughout the season to provide effective and responsible parasite-control strategies that balance immunity, treatment and persistency where appropriate.

Dairy cows rely heavily on the benzimidazole and macrocyclic lactone anthelmintic classes due to product licences and milk withdrawals. Levamisole is not suitable for use in dairy cows but may be a useful alternative wormer for dairy youngstock or heifers.

#### EFFECTIVE LUNGWORM TREATMENT

Lungworm infection in growing cattle can develop quickly and incur significant production losses. The risk from lungworm depends on pasture contamination, previous exposure, immunity and whether cattle have been vaccinated. Lungworm causes coughing and laboured breathing and, if left untreated, can result in death or long-term debility.

#### LUNGWORM - TOP THREE TIPS

- ▶ Monitor regularly for lungworm;
- ▶ Be vigilant for the first signs of coughing; and
- ▶ Dose the whole management group at the first sign of infection.

Levamisole is a particularly effective treatment for lungworm during the grazing period due to its unique mode of action. Because levamisole causes spastic paralysis of susceptible worms, cattle find it easier to cough the worms up following treatment.

#### USING LEVAMISOLE DRENCH

Levacide Low Volume contains 75mg/ml levamisole is recommended for use in cattle and sheep at a dosage rate of 1ml per 10kg. Always determine bodyweight as accurately as possible in order to avoid under-or overdosing. If animals are to be treated collectively rather than individually, they should be grouped according to their bodyweight and treated accordingly with properly calibrated dosing equipment. Always seek advice from your vet about the use of medicines appropriate to your farm.



**READ THE FIELD AND MAKE A TACTICAL CHANGE**

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# A SIGN OF PROGRESS

**TEAGASC'S SIGNPOST PROGRAMME HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME, BUT ALREADY GREAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN REDUCING THE EMISSIONS FIGURES ON FARMS OPERATING UNDER THE PROGRAMME. AND THIS, IN TURN, IS IMPACTING OVERALL ANIMAL HEALTH, WRITES *IRISH FARMERS MONTHLY* EDITOR, MATT O'KEEFFE**

Teagasc is wasting no time in widening the scope of Signpost management practices and technologies to involve a wider audience. One of the first regions to develop a strategy to roll out the programme to the general body of farmers is the Carlow/Wexford/Wicklow region under the remit of Teagasc regional manager, Ger Shortle. As part of this, a new Signpost Advisory Programme was recently launched at farmer, Joe Hayden's Orchard Centre in Tinahely, Co. Wicklow. The advisory programme will, Teagasc said, 'complement existing advisory services and programmes already being provided to farmers in the region.' It is designed to support and enable farmers to farm more sustainably with an emphasis on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from their individual farms,



**ON LIVESTOCK FARMS, FARMERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO CREATE A HERD-HEALTH PLAN, INCLUDING AN ANNUAL VACCINATION PROGRAMME, ALL CARRIED OUT IN CONSULTATION WITH THEIR VET**

Explaining the thinking behind the initiative, Ger said: "Signpost started out on a research basis in Teagasc. Then, we involved over 100 demonstration Signpost farms to provide practical examples of what could be done

on commercial farms. Now, we are at the next phase where we are extending the programme and our ambition is to get aspects of Signpost into 50,000 farms across the country.

"In our region that equates to 5,000 farms over the next five years. Our approach is to engage with 1,000 farms every year to get to our overall target. That will be done through a combination of individual and group engagements. The idea is that each farmer will start the process with a plan that is tailor made for his or her farm."

## PROVEN PRINCIPLES

The rationale for this approach is clear, Ger explained: "We have proven the principles on the 130 Signpost farms around the country. Those farms are adopting management practices and technologies that work well and suit their farm circumstances. They have delivered positive results. This is not only about reducing emissions. There are also benefits for productivity and profitability. Efficiency gains are well identified and





# Five things to know about Lungworm

Lungworm infection or hoose is one of the most important respiratory diseases of cattle in Ireland. Outbreaks can be widespread and unpredictable resulting in reduced animal performance and in severe cases animal losses. Infection can also be more severe when a long dry period is followed by heavy rain which leads to a large hatch, this is particularly relevant now.

1

Lungworm is a roundworm parasite similar to gut worms that completes its life cycle in the lungs. It is caused by a parasitic larvae ingested by animals off grass and is most commonly seen in the second half of the grazing season, when large numbers of lungworm larvae have built up on pastures.

2

Larvae need to move out of the dung pats and onto grass. The two main pathways are:  
Droplets of rain splash the larvae out of the dung and it attaches itself to the grass;  
The fungus *Pilobolus* has a mechanism where it “explodes”.

3

The clinical signs of disease include: Intermittent coughing particularly after moving stock; Coughing bouts while resting and showing signs of increased difficulty in breathing; Increased breathing rate; The tongue will also appear as they try to cough; Harsh deep ‘husk’ cough; Cattle losing condition rapidly.

4

If coughing is detected in a group of cattle at grass and hoose is suspected, all cattle in the group should be dosed. Cattle should be moved to a ‘clean’ pasture or an anthelmintic with persistent action may be used to prevent re infection. Calves that were heavily infected need to be closely observed in the 1-2 days post treatment.

5

Care needs to be taken when using long acting anthelmintics in the first grazing season because you may limit the animals exposure to lungworm larvae and cattle will remain susceptible to reinfection the following season due to not developing natural resistance.





established from many of the farm initiatives undertaken. It could be described as a dual winning strategy in that regard."

### HEALTH IMPROVEMENTS

Initiatives being adopted on Signpost farms are delivering improvements across a range of areas including improved soil fertility and increased grassland productivity as well as animal-health status. On livestock farms, farmers are encouraged to create a herd-health plan, including an annual vaccination programme, all carried out in consultation with their vet. Adopting these measures, many of them with a distinct emphasis on preventative as distinct from curative approaches, has delivered tangible results in terms of animal health status. On dairy and beef farms, there are direct and indirect animal-health benefits from adopting many of the Signpost directives.

Use of the Dairy Beef Index, for instance, produces earlier finishing cattle. That reduces overall methane emissions while also improving profitability, often through eliminating or reducing an expensive second wintering period. Keeping cattle healthy throughout their lives through the adoption of comprehensive vaccination programmes, ultimately, adds to the bottom line. Reducing the age of first calving delivers tangible financial returns and leads to lower replacement rates on both dairy and suckler farms. There are lower culling rates for infertility and other health challenges. Using high EBI bulls on dairy farms as well as sexed semen delivers emission reductions and raises health, productivity and longevity figures in dairy herds.

On sheep farms in the Signpost Programme, there are incremental gains in productivity and profitability as well as verifiable emissions gains from adopting many of Signpost's health-related recommendations. Adoption of the Eurostar Sheep Index has a significant and positive impact on ewe replacement quality with all the downstream benefits that deliver over time. As with cattle farms, sheep farmers are encouraged to create a flock health plan to improve a range of health challenges on sheep farms. Vaccination again plays a role as well as selective use of wormers and worming strategies to reduce worm resistance in flocks. The encouragement of rotational grazing has direct productivity gains on dairy, cattle and sheep farms as well as reducing

parasite challenges, especially for younger animals.

### PRACTICAL APPROACH

Ger puts the changes in management practices on Signpost farms in context: "We need to be careful even in the use of the word technology. It gives an impression of a flashy new gadget. In many cases, it really refers to the adoption of practical measures on farms. "Getting the pH right across your farm, for instance, is a practical technology or management practice. It's not a new concept, it has been done to a greater or lesser extent for generations on farms. However, many farms still have sub-optimal soil fertility, and a soil analysis and remedial application of lime is the first step to improvement. Making better use of on-farm nutrients is a second step to improving productivity and reducing emissions. Protected urea use delivers measurable gains as well as reducing the potential for losses to the environment. A combination of simple, straightforward actions has been proven to deliver positive outcomes, as we are seeing on our Signpost farms."



## USING HIGH EBI BULLS ON DAIRY FARMS AS WELL AS SEXED SEMEN DELIVERS EMISSION REDUCTIONS AND RAISES HEALTH, PRODUCTIVITY AND LONGEVITY FIGURES IN DAIRY HERDS

### SELF-ASSESSMENT

A key element of assessing farm sustainability is in allowing farmers to measure their progress, and to this end, a Signpost sustainability self-assessment profile is available. Among the questions dairy farmers are asked is whether they have a health plan in place and whether they use bulk milk screening to monitor their herds for infectious diseases. A variation on the same question is available for cattle and sheep farmers. They are also asked whether they have a herd/flock health plan in place and whether, in the case of cattle farmers, they complete the Beef HealthCheck report. For cattle and sheep farmers, the question around the use of faecal egg counts to monitor herds/flocks

for parasites is particularly stimulating. Lower use of drenches, pour-ons or injectables where appropriately based on clinical analysis, in turn, reduces resistance and cuts application costs and workloads. It is 'a win-win on several counts' according to Ger.

### WIDESPREAD ENGAGEMENT

The Teagasc regional manager is positive about the future: "Our sector has a plan to achieve the emissions target set out. It is being implemented and is delivering results. Sometimes farmers can be too hard on themselves. We are making progress.

"It won't only be those farmers with a laid-out plan that will adopt some or all of the practices required. Neighbours often see something that is working for another farmer and enquire and adopt it themselves. I don't want to minimise the task facing us all. What I find is that whether you talk to someone in the milk-processing sector or the supply side or someone in the local authority, everybody is starting to think along the same lines.

We have momentum building more so than previously and I'm confident that we will make a lot of progress in the coming years."

The Signpost Advisory Programme is a free advisory service and available to all farmers across all enterprises. The overall aim of the programme is to give all farmers the confidence to adopt new and existing technologies and production systems that will allow them to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining and improving farm profitability. The programme will utilise a new sustainability digital platform, called AgNav, which is being developed collaboratively by Teagasc, ICBF and Bord Bia. This new AgNav platform will allow farmers to 'Know my Number' by calculating and assessing the sources of emissions on their individual farms. The AgNav platform will also provide a way of comparing the impacts of different technology and farm practice options on reducing these emissions and for a farm to make a tailored plan by selecting actions that can be implemented on the farm in the future that will reduce emissions.





# Milk Quality Farm Walk

Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023 | 1.30pm

*2022 National Winners of the NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards*

**Connelly Family Farm,**  
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This event is organised by Teagasc, with the support of Aurivo Co-op, the National Dairy Council and Ornuu, and celebrates the excellence of Irish Dairy Farming, highlighted annually, by the NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards.

*The farm walk will address the following topics:*

- The Connelly family story
- Measures to minimise diffuse nutrient losses from farms to waters
- Necessary elements for an effective wash routine
- Building trust, from the ground up
- On farm tools to optimise animal health and performance
- Facilities, technologies, and practices for reducing workload and attracting people to work on dairy farms

For more information visit: [www.teagasc.ie/milkwalk](http://www.teagasc.ie/milkwalk)





## MESSAGES

- Save on costs wherever you can!
- Maximise milk sales efficiently.
- End the breeding season.
- Nitrogen (N) – two applications remain – phosphorous (P) and potassium (K) plus sulphur (S) required.
- Winter feed: assess availability versus requirement and act!
- Weigh replacement heifer calves and in-calf heifers NOW and act.
- To prepare for clover next year, spray for weeds now.
- Prevent skin cancer by using sunscreen every day.
- Be aware of the possibility of bullying and sexual harassment on the farm.
- Plan to use contractors more this year.



By Matt Ryan

## SAVE ON COSTS

- » This may seem like a surprising piece of advice after dairy farmers' average income in 2022 was just over €150,000 according to Teagasc's National Farm Survey. But they will do well to make half that this year – do a quick estimate now of your potential income for this year.
- » The big thing farmers must be ready for this autumn is large tax bills:
  - Get your accountant to give you a rough estimate now and put money aside so that you are not under undue pressure coming up to Christmas.
- » The actions to take now are to minimise costs and maintain milk sales as efficiently as possible.
- » Because farmers are used to spending, they find it hard to cut back. Ask yourself if you need to buy this or that; and will it make you financially better off?
- » Save as hard as you can on costs. Milk production costs last year were massive and varied from 35-55c/L (including labour). You don't need to be a genius to work out what you must do when milk price is 40-45c/L.
- » Use P and K plus lime as much as you can as the return is 152% on the money spent. These will help to maintain grass yield with less N:
  - Where clover is good, this will allow you to reduce N to 0 or 9kg/ha (7-8 units/acre) in July.
- » You must examine your attitude to meal feeding:
  - Give little or no meals to any animal, except small calves because the return on the money invested in meals for cows is only 3.2% (a no brainer!).
  - If you are tight in grass, coming out of the drought, then feed high quality bales – red or white clover bales would be ideal.
  - When grass is plentiful, the response to feeding meal to calves is 8:1 (that is 8kg meal is required to give 1kg weight gain); whereas in autumn the response is 4:1.
  - If you are feeding a lot of meals to cows, then you must be overstocked. After a milk recording, identify the poor yielders, the high SCC cows and lame cows, and sell them on.

- » Prevent mastitis (high SCC) by good, simple parlour practices and if selling cows, the advice is obvious.... sell high-cell-count cows.
- » Lameness prevention can be achieved by:
  - Good hoof-care management.
  - No aggressive driving to and from parlour.
  - Good roadways.
- » Get all cows in calf as they are more valuable than culls – so be very pro-active on heat detection. Early July mating gives an early April calver.
- » Scan now to confirm pregnancy – it will also tell you cows that are not in-calf or that have weak pregnancies. With veterinary advice you can take appropriate action.
- » Reduce dosing costs:
  - Rotate the calves either in front of the cows or the R2.
  - Before dosing, establish the need by having a dung sample analysed – several labs do this at a small cost.
- » Make adequate silage this year so as not to have to buy expensive feeds next winter.
- » Graze out paddocks well by not wasting grass by 'topping' or letting it rot by going stemmy.
- » Save on machinery running costs, particularly diesel, by grass budgeting to reduce topping and once per month nitrogen spreading.
- » A 10- or 13-times-per-week milking would reduce labour costs with minimum loss of milk.
- » Before a capital investment, be absolutely certain you can afford it.
- » Stay on top of paying bills so that you don't arrive in late autumn with an unknown amount of credit clients.

## MAXIMISE MILK SALES

- » Maximise the amount of milk produced at grass because it only costs €3 per day to feed a cow at this time of year, compared to nearly twice that in November-December.
  - The secret is plenty of quality grass.
- » Your milk price will be high if the percentage fat and protein is



- high, which is achieved by not having stemmy grass.
- » Cows that are yielding less than 12L now should be dried off and sold, as this leaves cheaper feed, grass, available to the remaining cows.
- » You will lose 1-3c/L if you incur SCC, TBC, and antibiotic or water penalties.
- » 16:8-hour milk day, helps to free up time and results in a little higher fat.

### END OF BREEDING SEASON

- » **May calvers have no part to play in profitable dairying**
  - The cut-off date for no May calvers is July 20 but target a cut-off date of July 12-15.
  - Don't stop bulling until mid-July, even if you think you have enough replacements. But you must have enough acres for them.
  - However, if you are tight on the number of replacements because of disease, mastitis or lameness issues, you should keep bulling cows with Jersey/Friesian until late July.
  - All cows now being bulled should get an AI Jersey bull or very short-gestation beef bull, such as Aberdeen Angus or Hereford.
  - But remember, cows bulling late in the season indicate a fertility problem.
- » **There are two to three weeks left in the bulling season.**
  - Make use of that time.
  - Use a short gestation bull.
  - A stock bull with no calving data will only make things worse so, make up your mind whether you are in milk or not!
- » **Stay focused on heat detection and you will save a lot of money.**
  - Every cull cow will cost €1,000-€2,500, depending on her age and EBI.
  - Every 5% culling over the Moorepark optimum rate of 18% results in a cost of €50 for every cow in your herd.
- » **All farmers should scan all cows now (even though it's a bit late).**
  - You will know cows that are not in calf.
  - It will identify weak pregnancies.
  - Remedial action, based on veterinary advice, should be undertaken.
  - Use fresh semen from a bull with a calving interval of minus 6-10 days, or a Jersey, because the calves will 'pop' out and the cow will jump up immediately after calving and come bulling quicker.

- Using a stock bull now is bad business as you don't know his gestation length and he may be infertile now after a busy season.

### FERTILISERS IN JULY

- » **There are only two N dressings of approximately 20-28 units/acre each, left between now and year end: in mid-July and mid-September.**
  - Farmers stocked at approximately 2.5 cows/ha have only one dressing of 20-28 units/acre left.
  - This is the time to review the quantity of N used versus your allowance. If you have more available, you have got your spreading programme wrong.
  - You should bulk spread each application across all acres on these dates.
- » **Nitrogen is a feed cost like meal but gives a return of 48% on the investment.**
  - Use protected urea as it is better for the environment (lower losses, etc.)
  - It is 11% cheaper than CAN and more expensive than ordinary urea but it is more efficient.
  - Where 10mm rain is forecast within 24-36 hours use protected urea.
- » **If soil index for P and K are low:**
  - Apply some P and K to improve growth and their content in grass.
  - Apply a high N compound with low P and K; but some farmers may have to apply 18:6:12.
  - If extra K is required, August is the best month to use.
- » **Apply 5-10 units of S per acre.**
- » **Empty all slurry and soiled water tanks now.**

### WINTER FEED: HOW MANY MORE TONNES REQUIRED?

- » **You must address this question for your farm now so that you can take remedial steps.**
  - Best to do the sums on a dry matter (DM) basis.
- » **Next winter, each cow needs 11kg DM per day. Weanlings need 4.7kg DM per day and in-calf heifer/store animals need 8.5kg DM per day.**
  - Discount for any meal feeding planned.
  - Also, decide on the length of your winter, adding on another two to three weeks, to be sure.



**ICMSA**

**THE FAMILY FARM ORGANISATION**

John Feely House, Dublin Road, Limerick.  
**Tel:** 061 314677 **Fax:** 061 315737 **Email:** cathalmaccarthy@icmsa.ie **Web:** www.icmsa.ie



- » **Measure your pit/pits in feet and do the following calculation:**
  - Length x width x average height and divide by 45 (an area of 45 cubic feet holds one tonne)
- » **If the quantity of silage in the pit is 300 tonnes (= 300,000kg DM).**
  - This equals 60,000kg DM (300 x 1,000 x 0.20), if the silage is 20% DM.
  - The first cuts will be 20-25% DM, while bales will be 35-45% DM this year.
- » **You will now be able to make plans for making up the deficit.**
- » **Options available:**
  - Sell off livestock, buy meal, straw, fodder beet/kale, rent ground for late second cut silage, rent silage pit and housing for the winter.
  - To see which option is the least expensive, cost all options out and use various combinations to make up the deficit,
  - Some farmers sell off cull cows in late July/August to allow more autumn grass, which can be used to extend the grazing season to late November.
- » **It is still not too late to plan and take a late second cut – will probably be the cheapest of all options.**
  - The yield will be 5-6 tonnes/acre of fresh silage.

### DON'T NEGLECT REPLACEMENT HEIFERS

- » **Weigh both R1s and R2s now to establish their weights relative to targets for July 1.**
  - Calves should be 27% of mature weight = 150kg (for 550kg herd).
  - In-calf heifers: 67% of mature weight = 370kg.
- » **Therefore, give special management treatment – either meals or graze in front of older calves or heifers – to all animals below the target weight.**
- » **Research has shown that moderate calves on July 1 can make good weanlings on November 1 if grazing management is top drawer.**
  - It is all about feeding high-quality grass to calves and heifers.
  - If you have them on good grass, they will gain 0.8kg/day (100kg in 125 days).
- » **Practice the leader-follower system.**
  - Calves graze in front of the heifers or cows.
  - Calves will do really well with no adverse effect on the heifers.
  - Parasites will have no effect on the calves as they will be diluted, therefore, little or no dosing.
- » **Or let the calves graze some of the cow paddocks.**
  - Let them into covers of 900-1,100kg DM.
  - Let them graze out the area in three to four days and then move on to next area.
  - Some baling may have to be done on these paddocks next time round.
- » **All farms have late 'weak' calves.**
  - Let these graze in front of the main bunch of calves on the very best of grass.
  - If that isn't possible, give them fresh grass in front of cows or heifers.
  - 1-2kg of meal could be justified to these but don't keep them near the house in a 'calf paddock' to feed meals because

parasites will prevent thrive.

- Adopt the 'buddy-buddy' system where two small calves are put in each cow paddock and leave them there, even as cows come to the paddock. They will thrive really well and no meals or dosing is needed.
- It is best to give best quality grass and no meals than to give them poor quality grass with meals.
- » **No meals should be fed to strong calves.**
  - The response is poor, requiring 8kg of meal to give 1kg weight gain.
- » **To prevent stomach worms with minimum dosing, keep calves on after-grass for as long as possible.**
  - Give a white or yellow dose in early July and move to after-grass.
- » **Under-target-weight R2s (they should all be in calf now) should be grazed in front of main bunch or run with the calves so as to get best grass.**
- » **It is absolutely essential to get the weights as described above from the contract rearer.**
  - You don't want any animals underweight and none excessively over target weights.
- » **The use of excessive quantities of dosing in calves, as distinct from grazing management to control parasites, will result in young and old cows with low immunity. This means they will have to be dosed regularly as cows.**

### TO PREPARE FOR CLOVER NEXT YEAR, SPRAY FOR WEEDS

- » **At a time when farmers need to grow as much grass as possible (16+ tonne DM/ha), it doesn't make sense to have weeds growing where grass should grow.**
- » **With the need to promote more clover on our farms, we need to embark on a serious attack on perennial weeds this year in fields into which we intend sowing clover next year.**
- » **Weeds and docks are costing farmers serious money, probably €10-€25 per acre in lost grass production.**
- » **Docks are a major economic cost to farmers because one dock (big one) every 35m<sup>2</sup> reduces grass growth by 1% per acre.**
  - As a rough guide, every big dock in that area causes losses of €10-€15.
  - Decide on the spray to use, a decision mainly based on clover content of pasture.
  - Any serious, economically minded dairy farmer must protect clover if they have it.
  - Best results are got by spraying three to four weeks after cutting silage.
  - Grass growth is slow relative to the growth of the dock.
  - Grass ground cover is low resulting in lower loss of grass yield.
  - Spray now in July or August, when there is great heat in the ground.
  - Spray on warm, sultry days.
  - Give serious consideration to spot spraying where docks are not too plentiful.
- » **Where weed infestation is low, we should spot-spray to minimise cost, this will be more effective and a lot better, environmentally.**
- » **The best time to spray for ragwort is December-January with Forefront T.**



## PREVENT SKIN CANCER

- » Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Ireland with about 13,000 annual cases.
  - Of these, nearly 1,200 are due to melanoma.
  - One in three men and one in four women are impacted.
  - With climate change, it will probably increase.
- » As you know it is caused by ultraviolet rays from the sun or sun beds (I doubt many farmers need these!).
- » Many Irish farmers have fallen victim to it.
  - It can become life-threatening in as short a timeframe as six weeks.
  - It can spread to other parts of the body.
  - It can appear on skin not exposed to the sun.
  - A very young friend of mine died at 30 years of age; it is not an old person's problem.
- » Preventative measures are obvious, even if we take them for granted.
  - Avoid prolonged exposure to the sun.
  - Wear sunscreen all the time – apply first thing in the morning.
  - Wear protective clothing that covers your arms, legs, and face (a wide brimmed hat is ideal as it protects your face, ears and neck).
  - Wear sunglasses.
  - Provide sunscreen in the office on your farm for your staff and, most importantly make them aware of the risk.
- » If you have any concerning blotches on your skin, consult your doctor

## BULLYING AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON FARMS

- » Dairy farms are very different places to work compared with 10-20 years ago with many more staff, as well as family members employed now.
- » That brings challenges for managers and employees – are we prepared?
- » The Health Service Executive, on its web pages has good, simple notes on these topics which could be used to formulate farm policy/protocols on sensitive issues. I quote from them here.
- » The main types of bullying include:
  - Verbal
    - Face-to-face, written or phone.
    - Includes name-calling, put-downs, slagging and threats.
  - Physical
    - Being punched, tripped, kicked and having things stolen or damaged.
  - Social
    - Being left out, given tasks far below/inferior to your capabilities, being ignored or having rumours spread about you.
    - Social bullying is one of the hardest types of bullying to identify and deal with.
  - Psychological
    - Hard to identify, less direct and feels like it is in your head.
    - Includes intimidation, dirty looks, stalking, manipulation, and unpredictable reactions.
  - Cyberbullying
    - Online offensive and abusive messaging, hacking into

other people's accounts and spreading rumours or sharing intimate photos of ex-partners or friends.

- Bullying on the job
  - Employers and employees have a duty by law to provide a safe and healthy work environment.
  - It can take the form of psychological and social intimidation.
- Sexual harassment may include:
  - Unwelcomed touching and physical contact.
  - Making promises in return for sexual favours.
  - Leering and staring.
  - Sexual gestures and body movement.
  - Comments of a sexual nature.
  - Questions about your sex life.
  - Sex-based insults.
  - Displaying rude and offensive pornographic material or images.
  - Criminal offences such as rude phone calls, indecent exposure, and sexual assault.
- » I refer to these – there are many more such issues now – so that owners/managers/employees can be aware of their actions before they can cause/become an issue on the farm.
  - Owners/managers should have policies and protocols for these, like all other tasks, and make all farm staff aware of their responsibilities.
- » What to do?
  - Talk to someone about it.
  - Record in a diary when it happened, how it happened, with/by whom, the nature of the bullying/sexual harassment, etc.
  - Record what you did/say in the circumstances.
- » Where to go for help?
  - The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (1890 245 545).
  - Free Legal Advice Centres (1890 350 250)
  - Citizens Information.

## FINALLY

- » Grass management.
  - After the drought, and with the return of rain, grass will 'fly' but N and S will be required seven to 10 days after rain comes to drive on growth so that you are in a position to extend the grazing rotation in August.
  - Average farm cover should be 180/cow, increasing from end of month. You must start to build up grass from late in the month, by lengthening the rotation to 25-30 days.
  - Late July is your last chance to sow grass and clover mix.
- » At 2,000 milkings – that is now – liners should be changed.
- » Have you gone out recently to a film with your partner?
- » Have you planned a holiday?

**'HIGH ACHIEVEMENT ALWAYS TAKES PLACE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF HIGH EXPECTATION' - CHARLES KETTERING**





# CASE IH LAUNCHES NEW FLAGSHIP OPTUM MODEL

CATERING FOR THE GROWING MARKET IN MULTI-PURPOSE, HIGH-POWER TRACTORS, CASE IH HAS LAUNCHED A NEW 340HP FLAGSHIP MODEL FOR ITS OPTUM RANGE. HERE, WE LOOK AT WHAT THE OPTUM 340 CVXDRIVE HAS TO OFFER

**This new addition, Case IH says, 'maximises the award-winning Optum concept of a high-power, low-weight design that can be ballasted as required'.**

Despite multiple improvements, the Optum 340 CVXDrive with AFS Connect is no heavier than the existing 300 and 270 models, but 'provides more power, ultimate productivity and the ability to handle any task' the company says.

The Optum 340 CVXDrive, manufactured at the Case IH factory in St Valentin, Austria, is ideal for draft and PTO applications, from tillage and seeding to mowing and transport. Case IH says it has one of the quietest cabs on the market with an array of advanced technologies including five years' AFS Connect advanced telematics. This brings additional benefits thanks to the AFS Connect portal, providing the capability of connected services for a longer period.

## PERFECT POWER-TO-WEIGHT RATIO

Product marketing manager, Dr Solveiga Kalinauskaite, says: "Optum 340 CVXDrive perfectly meets the requirements of large farming and agricultural contracting businesses needing a tractor with a high

power-to-weight ratio that gives it the versatility to take on a wide range of tasks." The beating heart of the 340 CVXDrive, its six-cylinder, 6.7L Stage V FPT engine, delivers power and torque for demanding field and transport applications. Incorporating the highly effective and well proven Hi-eSCR2 emissions reduction technology, it also includes Automatic Productivity Management (APM) which optimises the CVXDrive ratio and engine speed to suit power output requirements.

To deliver greater performance, productivity and efficiency, while maintaining reliability and durability, Case IH has equipped the Optum 340 CVXDrive with an upgraded CVXDrive transmission which incorporates improvements to the hydrostatic unit and control software, driveline components, rear differential, and rear PTO. Additionally, there is a new external engine blow-by filter to reduce service time. To increase versatility and compatibility in daily operations, the standard Isobus Class 3 can be upgraded to Tractor Implement Management (TIM), the latest tractor-implement communications protocol, so that certified implements can automatically control specific tractor functions.

The Optum 340 CVXDrive, like the existing 300 and 270 models, features a large 630L fuel tank that enables longer autonomous hours in the field, as does the best-in-class 750-hour engine service schedule. The new model offers 27hp, or 9 per cent, more power than the Optum 300 CVXDrive, while peak torque is 1,398Nm at 1,400rpm, compared with 1,282Nm at the same speed for its smaller stablemate. The powerful rear linkage which can lift 11,058kg, a front linkage with a maximum capacity of 6,016kg, and two-speed front and four-speed rear PTOs further enhance the tractor's versatility. Optum 340 CVXDrive therefore provides greater performance while maintaining reliability and durability.

## BEST CAB ALL ROUND

The new spacious cab provides best-in-class comfort and is extra quiet at just 66dB(A). Case IH says that operators will appreciate the 'excellent all-round visibility, premium-quality trim, automotive standard of fit and finish, plus a high level of equipment, which includes a key fob for keyless operation'. The cab's advanced design includes the redesigned ergonomic Multicontroller armrest, which places 95 per cent of the most-used functions





## THE OPTUM 340 CVXDRIVE, LIKE THE EXISTING 300 AND 270 MODELS, FEATURES A LARGE 630L FUEL TANK THAT ENABLES LONGER AUTONOMOUS HOURS IN THE FIELD

at the driver's fingertips, many of which can be operated either via the touchscreen or new integrated turn-and-press encoder dial. For ultimate operating and ride comfort, an optional new semi-active cab suspension can be chosen. Clear and easy to use, the new AFS Pro 1200 touchscreen monitor with bluetooth functionality gives an overview of all tractor functions. It helps the operator optimise engine, transmission, hydraulic and PTO performance, while also managing the operation of the implements. The new AFS Vision Pro operating system enables precision farming functionality, tractor systems and connectivity to match the required operating preferences. Optum 340 CVXDrive comes with Safeguard Connect, a comprehensive package of the best Case IH added-value

services, which provides long-term protection and maximises productivity to meet the requirements of modern, innovative farming and contracting businesses. This includes an extended up to three-year Safeguard warranty and five-year subscription to the unique AFS Connect advanced telematics portal which enables remote monitoring and management of farm, fleet, and data. A three-year subscription to Case IH MaxService, which operates around the clock during peak season in partnership with the dealer network to maximise machine uptime, is also provided, together with pre-season checks, and pro-active support and training to achieve the maximum performance from Case IH machines. The Optum 340 CVXDrive will be seen in public at various shows across Europe over the summer and autumn.



**NOEL DUNNE**  
Machinery editor

## A COG IN THE WHEEL

Well, readers, we are now into the second half of 2023. Time is flying and the farming seasons are just rolling by. First-cut silage is over, we have an eye on the second cut – if the grass would only grow quicker! And, of course, making some good-quality hay is also on the agenda. Combines have been pulled out all over the country for the once-over as winter crops are well on the turn in certain parts of the country with possible harvesting imminent in some areas. Spring crops are struggling a bit, thanks to the stop-start weather we have been having over the last few months. We can clearly see how climate change is impacting our agricultural system with the ever-changing weather impacting crops as they try to establish themselves and thrive. Extended very-wet periods are followed by extended very-dry and sunny periods and this, my friends, will be part of growing crops in the future. The Farm Machinery Show organised by the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA), set to take place on July 5-6 in Puncestown, highlights the significance of the farm-machinery industry in Ireland. It is a major cog in the wheels of what drives the whole agri-industry here. It is a significant rural employer throughout the 32 counties, spread over major manufacturers of farm machinery as well as 675 machinery dealers. This all plays a major part in keeping employment in rural towns and villages. In addition to this, you have companies supplying goods and services to these dealers and manufacturers all year round. This, in turn, keeps farmers and contractors on the move to produce the food that hits our tables 365 days a year. The FTMTA itself was founded in 1913 and has over 350 members and is growing year on year, comprised of importers, distributors, dealers, and agri-related businesses. On a global scale, exports of agricultural products increased from €60bn to about €74bn between 2020 and 2021, according to CEMA, which is the body that represents the European machinery industry. In its recent report, *European Agricultural Machinery Industry*, CEMA states that this is a growth of 23 per cent. Germany remains the global leader for machinery exports at €13.1bn; China is next at €9bn moving in front of the US at €8.1bn, while Italy and France complete the top five. When aggregated, the European Union leads global Agricultural Equipment Exports by far. In 2021, according to the CEMA report Ireland's total production of farm machinery came to over €180m and when it comes to the production of farm machinery, there are Irish-manufactured machines working all over the world. Long may it continue. Until next month, farm wisely, farm safely.





## A NEW HOLLAND ERA FOR CASEY AGRI

**NOEL DUNNE** RECENTLY VISITED CASEY AGRI IN GARRYHINCH, CO. LAOIS FOR THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF ITS APPOINTMENT AS A NEW HOLLAND DEALER

Casey Agri is a family-run business that has been serving farmers and contractors in Laois, Offaly and further afield for many years. Casey's built its reputation on sales, service and repair of both new and secondhand tractors in the past and, now, continues this level of service and back-up to New Holland products including tractors, as well as grass

and tillage equipment, further widening its services to local farmers and contractors. Casey Agri is a dealer for Bomford hedgecutters, Fleming products, NC equipment, Abbey Machinery, Sulky fertiliser spreaders, and Quickie loaders and attachments, and much more besides. We wish Casey Agri well in its New Holland era.



John Boland, Courtwood, Ballybrittas, Co. Laois and Robert Boland of the Casey Agri service team.



Jason Whitty, DLL Leasing, David Rapkins, New Holland, Martin Hayden, DLL Leasing.



Denise Casey, Casey Agri, Shane Fitzpatrick and Eddie Fitzpatrick, Garryhinch, Co. Offaly.



Adam Hogan, Denise Casey and Bob Casey, Casey Agri.



Martin Hayden, DLL Leasing with Frank Ward, New Holland.



Barry Wilson, Coolroe, Ballybrittas, Co. Laois and Peter Corcoran, Courtwood, Ballybrittas, Co. Laois.



# Irish Seed Trade Association introduce higher voluntary standard


Members of the Irish Seed Trade Association, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) seed certification division, have agreed to operate a higher voluntary standard (HVS) in relation to all cover crop/catch crop seeds that will be assembled, certified and sold from 2023. Both parties are anxious to ensure that every effort is made to ensure that invasive grassweeds like Blackgrass and Sterile Brome are kept out of Irish farms when sowing cover crop seeds.

Donal Fitzgerald, general manager of Goldcrop explains further. "Almost 100% of cover crop seed ingredients used in Ireland each year are imported from abroad, mainly from Europe. We saw some incidences in recent years where blackgrass turned up in foreign wildflower mixes and ISTA members and the DAFM felt that cover crop seeds could potentially be a source of such grassweed species. EU certification rules allow for a low tolerance of weed seeds in seed varieties, but Irish seed companies and the DAFM wanted to go a step further and introduce a HVS to guarantee Irish growers that any seeds being supplied would have zero levels of any invasive grass weeds like these."


To do this, all seed imports of cover crop seed varieties will be sampled and tested before being shipped to Ireland. The suppliers will have to produce an Orange Seed Testing Certificate which will then be examined by the DAFM, and only seed lots that are 100% free from any grassweeds like blackgrass, sterile brome, wild oats, canary grass etc will be approved for use in certified cover crop mixtures, or to be sold as straight ingredients either.

"It is really a 'belts and braces' approach by the Seed Trade to minimise the spread of these weeds, and we in Goldcrop are

proud to be participants in such a scheme. All of the certified mixtures containing approved ingredients will carry the Irish DAFM green label with the harp on it, and also a white strip at the end of the label declaring that the mix meets the higher standard. Goldcrop is just starting to produce its range of cover crop seed mixtures now for the autumn, the first of which will be sown in the coming weeks after the winter barley harvest," says Donal. The advice to all Irish growers intending to plant cover crops this year is to only use Irish certified seed mixtures that carry the green label with the HVS declaration on the bag.



**Cover Crops**  
**Quality seed mixtures designed for multiple crop rotation systems**

  **HVS Quality Certified Seed**

**[www.goldcrop.ie](http://www.goldcrop.ie)**





# INNOVATION AT THE HEART OF IAM

INNOVATION IS AT THE HEART OF IRELAND'S FARM-MACHINERY SECTOR, AND THE FARM TRACTOR AND MACHINERY TRADE ASSOCIATION'S JULY SHOW IN PUNCESTOWN IS TESTAMENT TO THAT. HERE ARE JUST SOME OF THE GAME-CHANGING MACHINES THAT KILKENNY-BASED IMPORTER AND DISTRIBUTOR, IAM AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY, HAS TO OFFER



## FARMDROID AUTONOMOUS ROBOT

Of particular interest is the FarmDroid FD20, a fully automatic lightweight robot that automates sowing and weeding. Described by FarmDroid as a 'game-changer in the farming industry', it offers unparalleled precision and efficiency in seeding and planting operations. It is designed to optimise productivity, minimise labour requirements and, FarmDroid says, it cultivates the soil ecologically and CO<sub>2</sub>-neutrally without any risk of damaging the soil's microstructure. The FD20 autonomously navigates fields, accurately sowing and seeding with consistency.

## STRAUTMANN - TS 140 MUCK SPREADER

The TS 140 is likely to be of interest to farmers looking to utilise their TAMS 3 allowance. Its wide-angle spreading units are equipped with two beaters arranged horizontally in combination with two spreading discs. With a diameter of 620mm, 12mm thick milling tines and 920mm large spreading discs, the

spreading unit ensures reliable distribution of spreading material over 24m width. All wearing parts of the spreading unit are made of Hardox and are reversible to increase service life and reduce maintenance costs.

## STRAUTMANN - VERTI-MIX

As customers are busy saving fodder, it will be soon time again to start thinking of the feeding season and IAM had a selection of Strautmann Verti-Mix Diet Tub feeders on display. Designed with precision and expertise, these feeders offer a perfect blend of functionality and durability. With their innovative mixing technology, they ensure a consistent and homogeneous feed mixture, maximising the nutritional value for animals. As feeding season looms closer, Strautmann Verti-Mix feeders provide peace of mind, enabling farmers to meet the nutritional needs of their livestock efficiently, helping to ensure for healthier and more productive herds.

## HARDI

The event showcased an array of exceptional Hardi spraying solutions, including the revolutionary NK range, the high-performance Mega model, and versatile Master sprayer, as well as the advanced Aeon trailed sprayer. With a commitment to precision, efficiency, and sustainability, Hardi has consistently pushed the boundaries of agricultural technology.

## BOMFORD TURNER

Bomford Turner, the renowned leader in landscaping machinery, showcased its exceptional line-up of equipment, including an array of hedge-cutting models, including the powerful Hawk 7.0 and Hawk 6.0 LPH, the versatile Kestrel 5.7 and Kestrel E, and the innovative Turbo flail mower. With a rich heritage of engineering excellence, Bomford Turner says it is committed to providing farmers with reliable and high-performing machinery.





**Tom Murphy**  
Professional Agricultural  
Contractors of Ireland



## WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE

**While most involved in the agricultural world are grappling with the day-to-day issues affecting farmers and agricultural contractors, I decided to get my crystal ball off the shelf and gaze into the future of agriculture in Ireland, a future that will be dictated by the European Union (EU).** I don't need a crystal ball to see that the Irish economy is flying. The Government estimates a surplus of over €16bn in 2024 – this having doubled since 2022. This is good news, particularly for the EU, as Ireland's increased contributions boost the EU coffers and are graciously dispersed between the Member States.

### REDUCTION IN CAP PAYMENTS

However, my crystal ball is quite misty regarding Ireland's agricultural future. The climate army blaming agriculture for causing the world's climate crisis is gathering pace; but they are, no doubt, happy to eat cheap, imported produce from countries where environmental standards are not comparable to our own. That said, through the mist

I see a continued reduction in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments. In the 1980s, CAP expenditure amounted to almost 70 per cent of the total income of the EU, today it has dropped to approximately 32 per cent – a massive decrease of 46 per cent. It is, generally, believed that bigger farms throughout the EU benefit more than smaller farms such as those we find in Ireland. In the future, will EU policy continue to support large-scale farms at the expense of smaller holdings?

### LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

I ask myself what is going on? Why such secrecy about the future planned for Ireland and other small farming countries. At present, Enterprise Ireland tells us we are the fifth-largest beef exporter and the biggest exporter of beef to Europe, standing at €2.5 billion and increasing annually. As Europe turns our farmers towards environmental sustainability, there is pressure on us to considerably reduce our national herd. But they do not appear to consider the long-term effects of this on Irish farms and we have not been given a plan on how Ireland's traditional farming will be replaced. Europe is no longer self-sustainable for food and has openly declared a policy of sourcing produce from outside the EU. This puts it in a very vulnerable position. The war in Ukraine has affected the fuel supply we require for our energy requirements and we are now scrambling to find alternative forms of European-produced energy.

Farmers, agricultural contractors, politicians and farming organisations need to wake up and smell the coffee, and start looking beyond the day-to-day issues to focus on the long-term consequences of CAP's dramatic payment reductions.

## A LONG WAY TOGETHER



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## GRANGE MACHINERY APPOINTS KELLY'S AS ITS FIRST IRISH DEALER

**Grange Machinery has appointed its first dealer in the Republic of Ireland, Kelly's of Borris, which is based in Borris, Co. Carlow and Kelly's of Laois, based in Abbeyleix, Co. Laois.**

A family-run company based in Holderness, east Yorkshire, Grange Machinery manufactures agricultural machines and wearing parts that offer affordable solutions to farmers across the UK, Europe, and as far afield as New Zealand.

The Grange Machinery product range helps lower the cost of crop establishment while improving soil structure and efficiency in the field. Grange machines are highly adaptable and can transform existing systems that may already be on the farm, offering greater flexibility and efficiency.

The range specialises in adaptable, low-disturbance toolbars and standalone looseners, which offer solutions to many cultivation and seeding challenges. Grange Machinery has also recently launched the Strip-Till Preparator, now in full production following successful on-farm trials. Also family run, Kelly's was established in 1957 and has been serving the Irish market for 66 years. It is one of Ireland's largest stockists of new and used agricultural machinery, farm machinery and plant equipment, and has recently taken delivery of its first Grange machine, a 4m Close Coupled Toolbar and 3m Grassland Loosener.

"Grange Machinery is delighted to have appointed Kelly's as its first dealer in the Republic of Ireland," said managing director

Rhun Jones. "There is an excellent fit between our products and the range offered by Kelly's and the company has a strong presence and long-standing reputation in an important Irish farming area."

Wayne Barry, branch manager at Kelly's of Laois commented: "We were looking for a range of products to complement the Horsch and Dalbo cultivation equipment that we offer and were very impressed with Grange Machinery, as a company and in terms of what it can offer. With customers moving towards min-till, the Grange Close Coupled and Low Disturbance Toolbars are ideal, while the Grassland Loosener will be of great interest to our livestock farmers. We look forward to showcasing the product range to our customers in the coming months."



## NEW CAMERA IMPROVES DETECTION OF BLUE HUES

Lemken has introduced the new IC-Light+ camera control, which detects the near-infrared range, for its Steketee hoeing machines. The new camera control makes detection easier in crops with a high proportion of blue in the leaves. This offers clear advantages in mechanical weed control, especially in the cultivation of onions, leeks, broccoli or red cabbage. The internally developed standard IC-Light camera system in Lemken Steketee hoeing machines captures the RGB colour range and reliably distinguishes between hues of green and red, the company says. Thanks to its self-learning mode, the system continuously develops as it is being used. The new IC-Light+ camera now also captures hues of blue as well, allowing even very young plants or plants with a particularly fine structure to be better identified and shown. The camera easily handles even onions



the size of a pin. The IC-Light+ camera is operated via the IC-Light terminal and allows hoeing as close as two centimetres from crop plants at forward

speeds of up to 15km/h. The camera detects up to five rows of plants at a time and controls the steering of the hoeing machine between the rows.

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# JCB LAUNCHES ZERO-EMISSION COMPACT ELECTRIC LOADER

**JCB IS ADDING TO ITS GROWING RANGE OF E-TECH PRODUCTS WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF AN ULTRA-COMPACT WHEELED LOADER POWERED SOLELY BY ELECTRICITY**

The low noise and zero-emission 403E compact electric loader is ideal for work in livestock buildings, glasshouses and alongside farm and horticultural staff, the company says. The machine boasts the largest standard battery pack in its class, with 20kWh capacity. This provides productivity that matches the popular 403 diesel model, capable of completing a full working day, or four to five hours of continuous use in a mixed-duty cycle.

In common with the JCB E-Tech range, the 403E has a built-in charger that allows connection to a range of on-site power sources. A 110V socket will fully charge the batteries in 12 hours, while a 230V industrial or domestic plug will charge the battery pack in just eight hours. JCB's off-board rapid charger delivers a full charge from a three-phase supply in just two hours. The machine is equipped with two independent electric motors, one for the driveline and one for the hydraulics. The drive motor offers 33.4kW of power and comes with three driving modes that the operator can toggle between, using two buttons on top of the joystick.

- ▶ Hare mode has a maximum drive speed of 20km/h for the most dynamic performance and productivity.
- ▶ Tortoise mode is limited to 8km/h for improved speed modulation. This contributes to increased battery life with no compromise on lifting performance.

- ▶ Snail mode has a 5km/h maximum speed, that can be adjusted in 5km/h increments through a new rotary controller and the multifunction display. This delivers precise speed control for precision driving and inching.

Drive is transmitted through an integrated drop-box to ZF axles that can be supplied with open differentials or with differential locks for maximum traction. The loader is offered with a choice of narrow or wide wheels, plus the option of agricultural or industrial tyres, making it suitable for a wide range of applications.

## PRODUCTIVE LOADER

Carried over from the 403 diesel model, the loader arms are available in standard and high-lift configurations. The standard lift arms deliver a pin height of 2.9m, while the high-lift model achieves a 3.1m pin height. Both loader arm set-ups come with a hydraulic quick hitch as standard, and the loader arms provide true parallel lift. The 403E offers a tipping load of 972kg with pallet forks, within a transport weight of just 2,671kg. This puts the 403E within EU trailer towable standards, making it an ideal machine for use on farms with more than one set of buildings, as well as for contracting, landscaping, fencing and other related activities. A heavy-duty counterweight is available as an option, increasing the tipping load by 118kg and the transport weight by 121kg. The machine has

a single joystick with a proportional auxiliary controller on top. An optional second auxiliary roller can be provided, allowing the operator to access all loader functions from one lever for faster operation.

The machine has a 20kW high efficiency hydraulic pump motor, and the hydraulic system offers two operating modes, controlled by a rocker switch on the main console. Shovel/bucket mode provides dynamic response, while the fork mode delivers increased precision control. A programmable constant flow auxiliary feature is also standard, to power motorised attachments such as, bedding spreaders used in cubicle houses or open yards, hay and silage bale processors, and yard sweepers, with the operator setting the flow rate through the main display and rotary controller.

The 403E is offered with a fixed or folding canopy initially, with a fully glazed cab as an alternative from quarter three in 2023. There is a new multifunction digital display, controlled by the rotary controller to the right of the loader joystick. The operator can use the rotary controller to set auxiliary hydraulic flow rates, inching travel speeds and other settings within the display. The monitor also provides all critical machine operating data, including driving mode, state of battery charge and travel speed.

The wheeled loader joins a rapidly growing range of full electric machinery within the JCB line-up, including the 2.5 tonne, 6m lift Loadall 525-60E telescopic handler, which also mirrors the capabilities of its diesel-engine counterpart while providing zero-emission performance at the point of use.





Pat McCormack,  
President, ICMSA



## DOES DAFM GIVE A DAMN ABOUT TAMS?

**One of the more intriguing aspects of the Irish Government's supervision of the interface between farming and the environment is the disconnect between the degree of urgency with which the Government announces measures and the implementation of same.** The 'get-cracking' tone in which those announcements are made is followed by a tortoise-like administration when it comes to actually doing what they are meant to be doing and lifting their end of the load. In some areas like forestry, for example, that disconnect has been observed for some years now. In others, like the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS), that disconnect is still ongoing, still a matter of gritted teeth and huge frustration.

### DIFFICULT TO DOWNRIGHT IMPOSSIBLE

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) recently announced that the closing date of tranche 1 of TAMS 3 would be pushed back by a fortnight to June 30. It's 'only' a fortnight but the thing is that the original closing date for applications – June 16 – was already too far into the year and had rendered

the scheme practically irrelevant. So, delaying the announcement to the end of the month effectively renders it pointless and really amounts to an admission that TAMS 3 for 2023 was a write-off as far as progress was concerned.

We already knew that the chances of getting this work done after getting approval in late September or early October were vanishingly thin. Farmers were going to be asking contractors to look at these projects just as the days get shorter and the weather worsens. It was going to be very difficult to get the contractors to take on that work. But pushing it all back like this by another fortnight probably moves that from very difficult to downright impossible. We think it's a bit of a fiasco and it should prompt a long, hard think within the DAFM about its ability to administer and organise timelines for schemes that we are constantly being pushed towards but for which the department itself seems singularly unready to supervise and run. We have a Government that announces daily the need for farmers to move towards demanding and heavily regulated environmental schemes but which is itself

(the Government) demonstrably unable to administer its end of these measures. The result is that the measures it is pushing farmers to adopt are left hanging in the air and unable to proceed through administrative delay and incapacity. Aside from its administrative inability to organise its own schemes, we have the fact that the current TAMS 3 costings were updated as recently as quarter four of 2022. The revised costings were hopelessly adrift of the real cost and the ICMSA pointed that out at the time. We are now halfway through 2023 and the costings are still not connected to reality with no immediate prospect of revisit or re-evaluation. Nobody had ever been able to establish how the DAFM had arrived at its costings, and it is perhaps time that the DAFM stepped forward to explain. In the medium-term – not to mind the long-term – there is nothing as corrosive to trust and confidence in our ability to make a historic transition to lower emissions as this kind of continued and demonstrable inability on the part of the DAFM to deliver and administer properly the very schemes that they are urging farmers to engage with.





## LEARNING FROM PAST MISTAKES

**CIARAN ROCHE**, FBD RISK MANAGER, OFFERS A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF HOW HE LEARNED TO CHANGE BEHAVIOUR ON HIS FARM



**I grew up on a dairy farm in Wexford. I loved farming alongside my dad. I was a 16-year-old farmer who loved sport and I brought my hurl everywhere, especially when bringing the cows in for milking. On a sunny March evening, I decided to go for the cows on the old David Brown as I was feeling tired.** This tractor was mainly used for scraping the yard and handling bales during winter. The tractor was in good condition, it had the scraper attached at the back, but it didn't have a safety cab or roll bar. I had to travel down a steep valley incline, over a small bridge and up another hilly field to get to the paddock where the cows were. I left the yard in great spirits planning to have the cows in quickly. When I got to the top of the incline I put the tractor in a low gear and turned it facing directly down the slope; I quickly realised that traveling down this incline wasn't a good idea, so I put the tractor in reverse. But the back wheels started spinning, the tractor accelerated down the field towards the stream and I lost control. Realising my mistake, my thoughts quickly moved to solution mode, and how could I avoid the tractor overturning or crashing into the stream and seriously injuring or killing me?

There was a narrow, level area about eight meters wide before the stream; I thought if I could get the tractor to slow down enough, I might be able to turn it at that point without flipping over. I had experience driving the tractor in the yard, but I'd never operated it on a hill, so I didn't really know what to do. I

decided to lower the scraper, as I thought this might slow the tractor down and make it more stable when I tried to turn it. The tractor only slowed a little. I managed to turn the tractor just at the right time as the tractor met the flat margin and it didn't flip. I was safe, but in shock. I promised myself that I would never go for the cows on the tractor again.

Six months later, I was at the top of the same valley on the David Brown and I said to myself 'you promised yourself you'd never do this again'. I turned the tractor around, headed back to the yard and grabbed my hurl. I never used the tractor to get the cows in again. Behavioural change is challenging, but it's never worth taking the risk. Over the years, many experienced tractor operators have told me what I should have done that day, but what I learned is that only experienced and competent tractor operators should ever operate a tractor, and to always use a tractor with a safety cab or frame. Farm vehicle accidents continue to be the main causes of fatal injuries on Irish farms. Forty-five per cent of farm fatal accidents involve vehicles, mainly tractors. Tractors and other farm vehicles are essential on the farm, however they are hazardous if not operated safely. Tragically, the proof of this is all too clear.

### PREVENTION

On a positive note, many tractor accidents can be prevented by following the steps below:

- ▶ Always maintain tractors in good condition, in particular the brakes, lights, mirrors and

wipers. Give special attention to ensure that all brakes are serviced.

- ▶ Ensure that a cab or safety roll bar is fitted.
- ▶ Only allow competent, experienced people to operate tractors. Children under the age of 14 must not be allowed to drive tractors/self-propelled machines. Young people must be at least 16 and hold an appropriate driver's licence before they can drive in a public place.
- ▶ As per the *Code of Practice on Preventing Accidents to Children and Young Persons in Agriculture* children under seven must not be allowed to ride on a tractor. Children over the age of seven may only ride on a tractor provided the tractor is fitted with a properly fitted passenger seat, with seat belts, inside a safety cab/frame.
- ▶ Keep children away from areas where tractors are operating.
- ▶ Avoid rushing, drive at a safe speed. Be vigilant and take adequate breaks when operating tractors.

Always think 'safety first' when operating farm vehicles. It could be the difference between life and death.

### DATA SOURCES

[https://www.hsa.ie/eng/publications\\_and\\_forms/publications/agriculture\\_and\\_forestry/a\\_review\\_of\\_work-related\\_fatalities\\_in\\_agriculture\\_in\\_ireland\\_2011-2020.pdf](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/publications_and_forms/publications/agriculture_and_forestry/a_review_of_work-related_fatalities_in_agriculture_in_ireland_2011-2020.pdf)  
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Colm Murphy's Kerry cows grazing on a sunny afternoon.

# A RARE BREED

IN 2000, BROTHERS, SEÁN AND KIERAN MURPHY SPOTTED A GAP IN THE IRISH ICE-CREAM MARKET FOR A PREMIUM, MADE-FROM-SCRATCH PRODUCT, COMPRISED OF THE FINEST IRISH INGREDIENTS. SINCE THEN, THEY HAVE FILLED THAT GAP WITH MANY CUPS AND CONES OF THE DINGLE DELIGHT THAT IS, MURPHY'S ICE CREAM. **BERNIE COMMINS** HAS THE SCOOP ON WHAT MAKES THIS RARE BREED OF ICE CREAM SO SPECIAL

When a key ingredient of your ice-cream is Irish cow milk, you are on to a winner. When that milk comes from a Kerry cow and your ice-cream is made in Dingle, well, that is next level. Dairy farmer, Colm Murphy has been supplying the milk that goes into Murphy's Ice Cream since the early 2000s. He has a small herd of Kerry cows – a native Irish breed believed to be one of the oldest milking breeds in Europe – alongside his larger dairy herd. Concerned about the potential impact of foot-and-mouth disease on the breed, when it hit Ireland back in 2001, Colm decided to play his part in helping to ensure the Kerry cow's survival. "I thought to myself it would be a travesty if the Kerry breed would be wiped out. Living here in the Dingle Peninsula, from a disease point of view, you are very lucky, just 30 miles out from the Atlantic, and most of the movement of animals is out of the Peninsula rather than into it. So, I just set about getting a few Kerry calves from Raymonde Hilliard [secretary of the Kerry

Cattle Society] who has really kept the flag flying for the breed," he says. Sometime later, Colm met Kieran Murphy – no relation – at a meeting where Kieran was guest speaker. They got chatting and Colm mentioned that he had some Kerry cows. "Kieran wondered what type of ice cream the Kerry milk would produce. He asked if I would give some of the milk, and I said I would. So, then he landed out here with the ice cream. I'm no Neven Maguire, but I thought there was, maybe, a little extra smoothness in the ice cream. But Kieran has a good palette, and he was impressed, and we just motored on from there," Colm says.

## ONCE A DOMINANT BREED

Once upon a time, the Kerry cow was a popular milking breed in Ireland, understood to be dominant here up to the end of the eighteenth century. But being a smaller animal, the Kerry could not compete with the milk-producing prowess of an evolving and better-bred Irish dairy herd.

"The mature Friesian cow would be about 600-650kg, whereas a mature Kerry would struggle to reach 450kg," Colm explains. The size, unsurprisingly, impacts milk production. According to the Kerry Cattle Society, the average milk yield of a Kerry cow is between 3,000-3,700kg at 4 per cent butterfat, compared to around 5,600-6,180kg at a little more-than 4 per cent butterfat produced by the average dairy cow, today.

In 2022, just 224 Kerry calves were registered with the Kerry Cattle Society.

Of the cow's traits, Colm says: "They are black, and in full armour with their horns, they remind me a little of the fighting bulls in Spain," he laughs. And, characteristics-wise, he says: "The Kerry is flighty, if you're an excitable person, you have no business with them," says Colm. "The Jersey cow, for example, is a curious animal, they will come sniffing around you, but the Kerry cow is more suspicious, more perceptive. They are



well able to fight their corner, and stand their ground."

According to the Kerry Cattle Society, Kerry cows 'are extremely hardy and will out winter quite happily, growing a good coat of hair which keeps the cold out' and their 'agility enables them to travel safely over rough ground, doing little damage to the pastures'. "The cows rarely have trouble calving, as there is more room in the pelvis than would appear from the size of the cow. The calves are easily reared and the bullocks will fatten, though they may take four to six months longer than other breeds."

Colm keeps just enough Kerry cows to supply Murphy's with the milk required to produce its ice cream – 30,000-40,000L per year. He delivers the fresh, raw milk several times a week – in old-style churns – to the Murphy's Dingle-based production facility, which is regulated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, where it undergoes pasteurisation.

According to the Kerry Cattle Society, the 'globules of butterfat in Kerry milk are much smaller than those found in other breeds, making it easier to digest'. This, it says, makes the milk ideal for feeding to babies and for others who find it hard to take fat. It continues: "This emphasises the breed as eminently suitable for fresh milk, cheese and yoghurt production. Several Irish farmhouse cheese makers use Kerry milk."

Ice-cream production may not feature in the above list but the 20-year relationship

between Murphy's Ice Cream and Colm Murphy's Kerry cows has proven that it is a premium and perfect ingredient.

### UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP

And it is a unique relationship, Niamh O'Kennedy, chief brand officer at Murphy's Ice Cream says: "Colm is a working farmer, so sitting and talking to him and hearing about his struggles keeps us very grounded, as opposed to just getting milk into us in cartons." This is part of a broader strategic business decision made by Murphy's Ice Cream, to always remain close to its Dingle roots. "We were listed in Tescos but then we sat down and discussed it, and we ended up saying no to it," says Niamh. She explained that they worried about compromising the quality of the product, and that they may not be positioned to meet the demands of such a listing. So, the company decided to focus more on locally sourced ingredients, and provenance, and to maintain the make-it-from-scratch approach – all tubs are still manually filled! Artificial colourings, flavourings, or powdered milk have no part to play in this ice cream dream, which starts off as a custard base comprised of Colm's Kerry cow milk, free-range egg yolks from a nearby farm, and cream from local co-op, Lee Strand. The sugar is the one ingredient that cannot be sourced locally, following the demise of our indigenous sugar-beet industry close to 20 years ago. Niamh explains: "We have to import the sugar, which kills us because we can't say that all ingredients are Irish. We get an organic sugar in from Italy." Murphy's

Ice Cream variations and different flavours feature 'inclusions' that are locally sourced, Irish-produced, or home made.

"Where possible, we will work with a like-minded producers, or we make it ourselves," says Niamh. "McCambridges brown bread, for example, we caramelise that ourselves [for the brown-bread ice cream]; sea salt ice cream is our best seller, and we collect the salt water ourselves from Wine Strand, which is west of Dingle, boil it down and that gives us the sea salt; and our latest inclusion is with NutShed, a company from Tipperary. We make our own cookies [for Kieran's Cookies ice cream], and we make the cookie sandwiches too," Niamh says.

The Dingle shop has expanded to include several other locations over the years such as Killarney, Dublin, Kildare, Galway, with a pop-up shop in Inch Beach, Co. Clare. And Cork city is the most recent addition to the family with the launch of a new shop on the June Bank Holiday weekend.

Plans are afoot for Murphy's to move into an expanded production facility, including bakery, in Dingle that will help them take the Murphy's Ice Cream experience to more people, and to other parts of the world such as the US and China it is hoped.

Diversification is a word that is often used today in a conversation about Irish farmers and the ways that they can add value to their enterprises. Colm Murphy may not be the ice-cream maker but he and his cows are very much part of a value-added venture that has put the Kerry cow, Dingle, and Murphy's Ice Cream on the map. And long may it continue.

Artificial colourings, flavourings, or powdered milk have no part to play in Murphy's Ice Cream.





MATT O'KEEFFE  
EDITOR

# WORLDWIDE VET SHORTAGE

**The efforts being made to increase the educational opportunities in Ireland to study veterinary medicine will, it seems, soon bear fruit.** Several third-level colleges and universities have tendered offers to facilitate the establishment of at least one new school of veterinary medicine. University College Dublin – which has recently been allocated 50 additional veterinary places – offers the only option currently, and it is anticipated that an announcement is imminent on where another faculty may be located. The shortlist includes South East Technological University (SETU), University of Limerick (UL) and Atlantic Technological University (ATU). Given political, regional and financially influential pressures being brought to bear, there is some likelihood of more than one location being chosen, or, alternatively, a sharing of locations for a second unified school of veterinary medicine. While a single inclusive campus encompassing academic and practical modules might appear the most efficient, don't underestimate the capacity of decision makers to opt for something for almost everyone in the audience. Despite vet numbers increasing from 2,200 in the past decade to almost 3,000 practitioners currently, many farmers, especially in remote areas, are finding it increasingly difficult to source a large-animal vet, with many vets taking the companion-animal route to practice. And who can blame them, with better working hours, less physical exertion, higher remuneration and top-class surgical

working conditions?

Brexit, we all know, has a lot to answer for – in so many ways – and our vet-shortage problem comes under that. How so? Well, more vets have been required for – and, indeed, tempted to accept – regulatory and inspection roles with government agencies monitoring the array of phytosanitary standards involved in trade between Ireland and the UK as a result of Brexit.

## NOT JUST AN IRISH PROBLEM

A shortage of vets for large-animal practice is not only an Irish problem. Internationally, vets are also in short supply to support livestock farming. In the US, fewer than five per cent of veterinary graduates take up a career in farm-animal-related veterinary care practices. While the problem is a general one across the US, it is becoming particularly acute in the mid-western states. Again, the availability of good career opportunities in pet care, with excellent remuneration and few night-time callouts, is proving very attractive.

In Europe, while there is not an actual shortage of vets, those interested in working in large-animal practices, or even mixed-animal facilities, are getting scarcer. In Germany, for instance, of the 20,000 veterinary practitioners licensed, fewer than 3,500 are involved in servicing the farm livestock sector.

## GREAT INTEREST

In some ways, Irish farmers are lucky. Such is the interest in veterinary medicine that many hundreds of would-be vets are willing



**DON'T UNDERESTIMATE  
THE CAPACITY OF DECISION  
MAKERS TO OPT FOR  
SOMETHING FOR ALMOST  
EVERYONE IN THE AUDIENCE**

to study abroad to realise their career ambitions. Most return well trained and motivated to engage in practice of one kind or another. While most of us might consider a career in veterinary medicine to be a well-paid option, the level of study required both initially and on an ongoing basis is considerable. It is also a costly career path, whether undertaken at home or abroad. The pressures can be immense, especially in lone practices and when those intensive calving periods require around-the-clock availability. In reality, if it were not for the TB Eradication Programme offering a steady income stream for vets, the financial returns would not be all that impressive. Specialisation offers alternative opportunities as do positions in the various service and animal pharma sectors. Probably one of the most singular veterinary options is working in the equine sector. Many train with the single-minded desire to devote their working lives to horse care. Whatever the motivation, the hope must be that we will have more opportunities for young people to train as veterinary practitioners in Ireland with the imminent announcement of at least one new veterinary school.





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