

Management Hints

- ▶ Identify and celebrate your successes of 2019
- ▶ Invest in an 'honesty mirror' immediately.
- ▶ Put "oil/fuel" on your fields with N, P, K and Lime to get 150% return.
- ▶ Doing the necessary now to get the 6 week calving correct in 2020.
- ▶ The 1st Rotation plan gives you great reassurance – do it and operate it
- ▶ Don't ignore the miscellaneous suggestions.

CELEBRATE THE SUCCESSES OF 2018!

- ▶ We/you have to take the positives out of 2018, a difficult year for many dairy farmers, so as to move into 2019 in a positive frame of mind. List out, by talking it through with your family, what yours were.
 - Dr Maureen Gaffney, a physiologist, says that our day, our week, or year is about "small wins" – list out to keep yourself "geed-up"; not about over-focusing on the things that went badly or wrong.
- ▶ Yes, we, as a family, survived in pretty ok/good health!
 - We paid most of our bills,
 - We kept our friends and their support,
 - Our team, be it Limerick, Ireland or club, won; but more importantly, our parish club team participated competitively in the local championship,
 - My son/daughter did well in exams, sport or seeking a job.
 - Etc.
- ▶ Now for a quick look back on 2018, based on the early Dairy Profit Monitors, analysed by George Ramsbottom:
 - For spring milk producers:
 - Net profits are down 4.9c/l, €245/cow and €504/ha.
 - Milk solids (MS) produced was up 27 kgs to 471kgs/cow while the % F & P increased slightly,
 - However, total variable costs increased by 3.24 c/l to 15.21 c/l (target 7-10); meal being totally to blame as farmers fed an extra 700kgs/cow to compensate for 3-4 tons (DM)/ha less grass grown.
 - For winter milk producers:
 - Net profits are down 4.9c/l, €260/cow and €441/ha.
 - Why anyone would be a winter milk producer I don't know as profit per litre was 10.5 compared with 12.03 c/l for the spring producer
 - Why any dairy farmer "in their sane senses" would be in any sort of a cattle system when the profit is MINUS – that means that those farmers are decreasing their liquid assets, year in year out, with the result in a few years they will have no such assets. And worse still, farmers are renting land miles from home for this therapeutic, time wasting, loss making venture.

mirror. Let your partner and family be that mirror and tell them what you did/achieved relative to targets and what you will do in 2019 – they can ask 'is it logical'. Try it, but ask them to read these notes first!

- ▶ You may not do the Dairy Profit Monitor but your overdraft, and the money owed to merchants, Co-ops, contractors, shop-keepers, etc. will alert you to where you stand this year relative to January 2018. That's what the mirror tells you.
- ▶ Why anyone would be a winter milk producer I don't know as profit per litre was 10.5 compared with 12.03 c/l for the spring producer!
- ▶ Why anyone would not believe Moorepark research I don't know – we have no other proof – "stick with the knitting", that is grass based dairying but do it well. Independent analysts have calculated that EBI is worth €1.5 billion since its inception and yet we have dairy farmers sceptical of it. Let's get real.
 - The target are:
 - A profit of €2500/ha
 - 500 kgs MS from 500 kgs meal.
 - 90% 6 week calving rate,
 - 16-18 tons DM/ha of grass grown (12-15 tons/ha utilised).
 - You may not hit these standards but you must benchmark yourself against the good people in your Group and ask yourself "How can I get there?"
- ▶ Farmers fed 1.78 tons of meal per cow (target 500) in 2018.
 - John Roche, NZ researcher, said at the Grassland Association Conf, that in NZ the farmers never reduced to realistic meal feeding levels after one bad year where they fed a lot of meals. A serious warning to us.
 - With a lot of grass available this spring it should be possible to get by on 2-3 kgs cow in February and 2 kgs meal in March with 1 kg in April.
- ▶ Over the last few years farmers have been spending €300 -350 per ha on fertiliser when the spending should be €400-420/ha to maintain soil P & K with the usual N limits.
 - That means they are not putting on adequate P & K – it is like driving a car without oil!
 - Because fertiliser prices have increased the figure this year will be over €460/ha – put that in your plan.

A FEW QUOTATIONS FROM GRASSLAND CONFERENCE:

- ▶ Denis O'Donovan:
 - On sustainable milk production (remember the following so that you can argue your case for grass-based farming):
 - Carbery Co-op farms produce 1 litre of milk from 7 litres of water compared with USA farms requiring 140 litres,
 - Carbery farms use 1.04kg carbon dioxide per litre of milk
 - European farms use 1.5kgs carbon dioxide per litre of milk.

"MIRROR OF HONESTY":

- ▶ Yes that's what is required; but we never look at that



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Management Hints

- Message: High cost meal feeding systems, even in Ireland, are bad for the environment and are less profitable.
 - On P, K and Lime – “Give no paddock an excuse not to grow grass”
 - On what Matt Ryan said 15 – 20 years ago to him: “Put all your eggs in one basket and mind that basket with both hands”. I am glad I said it!
 - He and a few other farmers have developed West Cork Farm Tours (we must all think outside the box to keep ourselves and our communities vibrant)
- ▶ John Roche, NZ Researcher:
- On Hidden cost of meal feeding:
 - Worldwide research back up the Irish figures (G Ramsbottom) that for every €100 spent on meal the actual on-farm costs are €161 (a 61% increase)
 - The cost of ‘marginal milk’ (due to high stocking rates etc) produced from meal was approx 40c/l (the Irish figure was 45c). Grossly uneconomical!
 - High meal feeding systems resulted in the highest levels of nitrogen leaching from the soil.
 - On Profit:
 - Operating profit increases with declining operating costs
 - Operating profit increases with increased pasture utilisation.
 - On independent research and advice available in Ireland:
 - Put big value on it, support it and pay for it (most countries have nothing like it).
- ▶ Mike Brady:
- The top dairy farmers know the 2-3 KPI’s to focus on: Grass, suitable cow, costs and people management skills.
- ▶ David Fogarty:
- On winter feed plan:
 - Aim to stock cows at 5 cows/ha in April-May and 4 cows/ha in June – July. If growth rates fail you add in a little meals or take other steps.
- ▶ Richard O’Brien:
- Measure/manage grass to achieve 10+ grazing’s/year.
 - Use the spring rotation planner to have grass from early February to 1st April and guarantee grass quantity in April.
 - Use the autumn rotation plan to guarantee grass in the cows diet until 15-25 November but more importantly, to have grass in the spring.
- ▶ Stan Lalor:
- P & K soil needs are driven by the amount of grass grown and used.
 - Front load P feeding in spring to encourage root development.
 - Apply K later in the year to avoid grass tetany problems, but apply it – too many soils are deficient, with yield losses of 15-20%.
 - Apply sulphur to the ratio of 12N:1S because it is involved in the plants protein functions, just like N.
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- NITROGEN, P & K - A MUST!**
- ▶ Nitrogen is the cheapest feed input you will buy.
 - ▶ Use at least 30 units urea on every acre of the farm on the same day.
 - You must put it on immediately if you have not done so – as early as you can on wet farms.
 - Even on fields with heavy covers.
 - Saves labour and confusion.
 - Maximise yield of grass per unit spread.
 - ▶ Contrary to popular belief all paddocks, even ones with 1,500 Kgs DM grass cover, should get N, except paddocks that got 2,500-3,000 gallons slurry per acre. Approximately one-third of the farm, any field with a cover of less than 600kg/ha, should get slurry, trailed & shoe, as the Nitrogen source and the remaining area get 23 units per acre of Urea. Because farmers “have to get rid of slurry” some carelessly and without consideration apply it to good grass with the result it won’t be eaten by cows (rots), leaving aside disease risks.
 - ▶ On farms that applied Urea in mid-January, the next application of at least 40 units Urea/acre falls due in mid to late February (4 weeks after the first application).
 - ▶ Use the weather forecast so that no heavy rain comes within 24-48 hours.
 - ▶ There should be no argument on which Nitrogen to use as Urea is 30-35% cheaper than CAN, and is equally as good but care must be taken where soil ph is high.
 - ▶ If you do not have time to spread Nitrogen and/or slurry, get someone in to do it because any delay will cost you a fortune.
 - ▶ The advice above is for farms who have no P or K to apply, having done so in September. However, the following advice should be followed where P and K are required:
 - Apply 2 bags 10:10:20 (maintenance P & K) or 18:6:12 (same again later in year) per acre to farms with a Soil Index 3. More is required later for lower Index farms. This is critical advice.
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- 2020: 6 WEEK CALVING RATE CONTINUES:**
- ▶ February is critical in cow and heifer management so that health and stress issues are minimised to maximise 2019’s submission rate and resulting 6 week calving in 2020.
 - A case of milk fever increases days from calving to conception by 13 days
 - An ovarian cyst increases it by over 70 days,
 - A sick cow’s conception is delayed by 80 days,
 - A lame cow’s conception is delayed by at least

Organic Farm Walks 2019

Teagasc, Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine and organic organisations invite all farmers and members of the public to see organic farming in practice and to meet and speak with the producers and sector's experts.

Wed, 16th January | 12pm

Timothy O'Donoghue,
Farranaclyffe, Tipperary
Suckler to Weanling

Wed, 20th February | 12pm

Peter & Jenny Young, Castlefarm,
Narraghmore, Athy, Co. Kildare
Dairy

Wed, 17th April | 12pm

Donal Keane, Camelton Stud,
Summerhill, Co. Meath
Suckler to Beef, Cereals

Wed, 24th April | 12pm

Stuart & Jean Kingston, Upper
Forrest Farm, Farnanes, Co. Cork
Beef Finishing, Cereals

Wed, 8th May | 12pm

Ross & Amy Jackson, Woodview House,
Lacka, Carrig, Birr, Co. Offaly
Cereals, Sheep, Beef Finishing

Wed, 22nd May | 2pm

Andrew & Leonie Workman,
Dunany Flour Organic, Togher,
Drogheda, Co. Louth
Cereals, Milling Flour

Wed, 29th May | 2pm

Tom & Gemma Dunne, Seefeld
Farm, Ballinaslee, Durrrow, Co. Laois
Cereals, Beef Finishing

Wed, 5th June | 2pm

Sean Condon, Fanningstown,
Crecora, Co. Limerick
Dairy

Wed, 12th June | 2pm

Jason Stanley, Castlefleming,
Errill, Co. Laois
Sheep, Cereals

Wed, 19th June | 2pm

Nurney Farm Organics, Carbury,
Co. Kildare
*Fieldscale Veg, Protected Crops,
Poultry eggs, Direct Selling*

Wed, 26th June | 2pm

White Oaks Acorn Project, Leanamore
Rd, Derryvane, Muff, Co. Donegal
Fieldscale Veg, Protected Crops, Direct Selling

Wed, 3rd July | 2pm

Paul Kelly, Castledargan,
Ballygawley, Co. Sligo
Suckler to Weanling & Store

For more information please visit www.teagasc.ie/organics



Management Hints

- 14 days
 - A herd losing more than 0.5 BCS has its conception rate reduced by 20%.
 - A herd with a BCS of less than 2.75 has will have 16% lower pregnancy rates
 - A difficult/hard calving will delay the onset of heat; while womb infection will have the same effect. Hence the need to manage calving carefully; don't rush the cow and particularly heifers and if you have to handle do so hygienically.
 - Acidosis/ketosis, even subclinical, result in losses.
 - Mastitis, not only, causes big financial loss but terrible labour disruption.
 - ▶ Vaccinations: Another time critical exercise and so as not to get caught near the breeding season do them in February:
 - BVD, IBR and Lepto are the ones to do for.
 - If late scour or pneumonia or coccidiosis have been a problem take veterinary advice on vaccination now.
 - ▶ Your vet is the secret now to preventing all the above losses/problems.
 - You must work on prevention care.
 - ▶ Calf and heifer management are critical to achieving target weights.
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- 1st ROTATION PLAN:**
- ▶ This a "must do plan" for all dairy farmers.
 - It is cheap (really no cost) and guarantees success as outlined above.
 - ▶ Can I guarantee you that if you let out your cows to grass on the 5th February that you will have enough grass until early April and then have grass in April?
 - Yes I can! How? Because there will be 60 days for the grazed area to grow back for the 2nd rotation.
 - The spring rotation planner does all that for you.
 - Get it from your adviser/discussion group.
 - ▶ This planner will show you what area of ground you allocate to your cows each day
 - You must never give more than the specified area of ground; otherwise, you will finish the first rotation too soon.
 - If you have not enough grass on that area you must feed meal and/or silage. This will be indicated by the allocated area being 'skinned' and the cows looking empty and hungry.
 - ▶ You must have 33 to 40% of the available area grazed by 1st March. Why? Because...
 - You won't have enough grass on the 2nd rotation in April.
 - You need 50 to 60 days from grazing the first paddocks in February to the next time they are grazed in April.
 - ▶ If you have some paddocks with very heavy covers, postpone grazing these until you have a lot of cows milking, by grazing lighter paddocks; say 900-1100 kgs, first. Otherwise you will waste too much grass, do too much ground damage and you will not get 30-35% of the area grazed out before 1th March.
 - On-off, that is 3hrs out grazing, is an essential practice. This prevents poaching damage and is most neglected in Ireland.
 - Because of the amount of grass on farms this year it is certain that farmers must have cow out "full-time" from very early February – my definition of full-time is 2-3 hours (not more) after both morning and evening's milking.
 - Do the am milking at 7am and the evenings at 2-3pm bringing the cows back in to very, very little silage at 6-7pm.
 - So as to graze the 30% target, start grazing light covers and then the heavy covers around 20 – 25th Feb when a lot of cows are calved and they have a much improved appetite.
 - As gut fill is a major cause of poor grazing activity, minimum silage should be fed.
 - ▶ The 1st rotation should end as near as possible to the 1st April because:
 - Moorepark has said that farmers whose 1st rotation end around that time grow most grass.
 - It is partly explained by the fact that they also say that each extra grazing rotation/year results in an extra 1300 kgs DM/ha being grown. Therefore picking up a few days in early April will go some way towards an extra grazing in 2019 (set this target).
 - ▶ To save on labour, and because with the spring rotation plan you know the exact area of ground to allocate each day, you should put up the strip wires in the correct allocated areas for at least 7 – 10 days in advance. It is being done and is a great idea.
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- MISCELLANEOUS:**
- ▶ Cow care: Continue feeding 2-3 oz per head of a good dry cow mineral.
 - Lameness or cows tender on the feet should be looked after by FRS (you haven't time)
 - At calving (it still may be possible to get a night time calver) don't rush in with the jack at calving as 'damaged' cows will not go back incalf, neither will 'infected' cows.
 - Feed a little meal (0.5 to 1 Kg), particularly heifers, for 2 weeks before calving as it allows you move on to full meal feed within days of calving.
 - Post calving this year farmers should feed 2-3 kgs meal with grass and minimum silage.
 - Get your vet to walk through your cows so that he/she, with the history and BCS, can alert you to possible problems (risk manage your animals health)
 - ▶ Graze the silage ground twice before closing on 10-20th April
 - This is a great practice where some of the milking platform is being cut for some silage in June.

- It will have no adverse affect on the yield of grass from those fields. In fact it will result in more grass (10%) growing on these fields devoted to silage and being cut during the 2nd week of June.
- When doing this, before closing, you must graze the silage ground first in February (usual rationing) and again early April (6th-14th). That is for the first 6-8 days of the 2nd rotation. Silage ground should get the slurry after grazing at 2,500-3,000 gallons per acre after the first grazing and again after the second grazing.
- ▶ Don't let "things get you down" as 90% of our worries never come to fruition:
 - Things get us down when we are tired, over-worked and when we perceive things are going against us. (deal with the cause of the problem)
 - Go to your doctor for a health check ASAP and act on his advice.
 - Take some time off away from farm each week.
 - Invest in very good wet gear (two sets) as you will have to operate in all weathers without putting your health at risk.
- ▶ Short of labour: It will almost be impossible to get someone at this late stage. Don't give up. Try all the channels: the FRS (keep your name in there), contact local sports clubs, neighbours etc and advertise everywhere.
 - Contractors NOW represent your greatest chance of taking work off yourself:
 - You should NOT be spreading fertiliser or slurry, feeding silage to animals or doing any maintenance work as there is a contractor out there 'mad looking for work' for himself and his machinery.
 - There are neighbours, men and women, who would be very willing to rear calves for 2-3 hrs per day at €14-20 per hour. Ask them.
 - Milkers: once heifers are trained there must be students in the neighbourhood who would milk with you or for you at weekends to earn some pocket money.
 - Contract calf rearing: seriously consider it as it would be a great labour relief,
 - Some farmers are eulogising about the benefit of automatic calf feeders and it not too late to buy.
 - Consider OAD (once a day) milking for 3 weeks in February – will free up 2-3hrs per day.
 - Identify 'time wasters' by being conscious of what is using most of your time, such as, dragging new born calves 200-400 yards and doing the same with milk, feed and hay; or calving pens in wrong place relative to cows.
 - ▶ Caring for the young heifer calf is critical to her long term future:
 - Colostrum is key and worth spending time to get it correct with the calf; everyone is familiar with the 1, 2, 3 rule:
 - Use colostrum from the first milking.
 - Give colostrum within 2 hours from the calf's birth,
 - Give at least 3 litres.
 - And give another 2 litres within the next 6 hours.
 - A stomach tube (done correctly) alleviates some of the feeding problems.
 - Disinfect the naval with tincture of iodine after birth.
 - Avoid virus pneumonia by having plenty of ventilation (0.8 sq. ft. per calf inlet and outlet), you must measure this to confirm.
 - Make plans to have calves at grass in March or at least have some access to grass to reduce labour needs and housing related problems.
 - Feed milk replacer to replacement heifer calves so as to prevent the possible spread of John's Disease.
 - ▶ Bulling heifers need to be on weight target to deliver 70-80% calved in 3 weeks in 2020.
 - She must now be 50% of her mature weight, that is, 280 kgs for a Friesian (560kgs mature weight) and 265 for a Jersey cross. Weigh them!
 - ALL animals less than these weights must get special treatment to make target bulling weights. Contract rearer's please note!

"If we think of everything we have to do we become overwhelmed. If we do the one thing we need to, we make progress."



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