IRISH GRASSLAND ASSCIATION

"to advance the knowledge of good grassland management in Irish Farming"

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Late Pregnancy Nutrition

- The Foundation of Flock Profitability

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Introduction

The nutrient requirements of the pregnant ewe increases dramatically during late pregnancy due to the rapidly growing foetuses. Foetal weight increases by 70, 50 and 25 % respectively during the last 6, 4 and 2 weeks of pregnancy. Consequently the nutrient requirement of the ewe increases by 40, 60 and 70 % for ewes carrying singles, twins and triplets respectively during the last 6 weeks of pregnancy. Correct nutrition during this vital period is the foundation of flock profitability as lamb birth weight and viability are improved, consequently, age at slaughter is reduced. The aim of this paper is to present data from recent studies at Athenry on the effects of late pregnancy feeding on subsequent lamb birth weight and growth rate.

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Impact of silage quality

The majority of ewes that are housed are offered grass silage as the sole forage whilst indoors. The major factors that effect grass silage feed value for sheep are digestibility and chop length.

Digestibility: Digestibility is the most important factor in grass silage affecting animal performance as it is positively correlated with energy concentration and intake characteristics. Previous studies have clearly illustrated that each 5 percentage unit increase in digestibility increases milk yield of dairy cows by 1.85 kg/cow daily, carcass gain of finishing beef cattle by 21 kg over a 150 day finished day period and carcass gain of finishing lambs by 1.9 kg over a 50 day finishing period respectively. A study was undertaken at Athenry to evaluate the impact of silage digestibility on the performance of pregnant ewes and of their progeny until weaning at 14 weeks. The results are presented in Table 1. Increasing silage digestibility, when offered at similar levels of concentrate, increased ewe live weight post lambing by 12.2 kg, lamb birth weight by 0.55 kg and lamb weaning weight by 1.8 kg. The increase in lamb weaning weight reduced age at slaughter by approximately 2 weeks, subsequently increasing the price received per kilogram of carcass, as carcass price declines as the season progresses. An alternative way to evaluate silage feed value is to determine how much concentrate supplementation is required to yield lambs of a similar birth weight. In the current study, ewes offered the high feed value (79% DMD) grass silage and supplemented with 5 kg concentrate (soya bean meal plus minerals and vitamins) produced lambs which were heavier than the lambs from ewes which were offered the medium feed value (73% DMD) silage supplemented with 20 kg concentrate. Therefore the high feed value grass silage enabled concentrate supplementation to be reduced by at least 75 %.

IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION CORPORATE MEMBERS 2010



Newsletter No. 10 December 2010

IGA Presidential Address

December 2010

Dear Member,

Welcome to this first edition of our new magazine style publication. What initially intended to be a newsletter has been upgraded to carry the increased volume of articles and items, as a direct result of our increased activity. Furthermore we intend to continue this magazine publication on an annual basis, along with our existing newsletter.

As 2010 draws to a close, we can reflect back on a year that offered renewed hope for Irish grassland farmers and associated industries. The recovery in product prices across cattle, sheep and dairy enterprises, along with excellent weather increased confidence in an industry that had been taking a beating for the last number of years.

2010 will also be remembered as a very successful one for the Irish Grassland Association. The year saw the appointment of two new Regional Development Officers as well as a new office manager, the posting of all past IGA research papers onto the members' area of our website as well as the launch of a new student initiative and hosting a number of local and regional events, along with our usual national events. These all contributing to the doubling of both our individual and corporate membership over the last twelve months.

2011 promises to be equally exciting. The launch of the Governments Food Harvest 2020 report, targeting substantial growth in agriculture, shows for the first time since the arrival of the infamous Celtic tiger that our Government sees agriculture as a major stimulus in the future of the Irish economy.

The Irish Grassland Association is well placed to play its part in this growth phase by providing forums and events to allow the transfer of relevant technology and research findings. In 2011 our main priority will be to provide a service that gives value for your membership. We intend to do this by organising an increased number of regional events through our existing Regional Development Officers (RDO's). In addition we will be looking to take on more RDO's as we endeavour to spread the grassland and profit message into more parts of the country. However, all of this work must be done with a close and watchful eye on our ongoing finances.

As we enter the 4th year of our five year plan we have achieved most if not all of the targets originally set, so it is time to write a new five year plan to address the new challenges facing this Association in what are difficult times for this country.

Finally I would like to wish everyone good health and success in all your endeavours for 2011, at a time that I believe will prove to be a good time to be a farmer!

Yours sincerely

Donohoe ylip

President of the Irish Grassland Association

Nominations sought for the Irish Grassland Association Lifetime Merit Award 2011

The Irish Grassland Association Lifetime Merit Award was established by the association in 2009 to acknowledge the unique life contribution of an individual to the understanding and application of grassland husbandry and technology. This prestigious award is a public endorsement on behalf of our Association and its members, to the great and important contribution made by this individual to our industry and lives.

If you would like to nominate a person for this award

please email your nomination and a justification to secretary@irishgrassland.com before 26th January 2011.







Late Pregnancy Nutrition - The Foundation of Flock Profitability Continued from page 1

Table 1

The affects of grass silage feed value and concentrate feed level in late pregnancy on ewe and subsequent lamb performance

	Silage DMD (%)		
	73 79		79
Concentrate (kg/ewe in late pregnancy)	20	5	20
Ewe weight post lambing (kg)	61.4	70.4	73.6
Lamb - birth weight (kg)	4.6	4.9	5.1
- weaning weight (kg)	32.9	34.0	34.7
- gain – birth to weaning (g/d)	292	301	306
	(Keady an	d Hanrahaı	า 2009)

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The effects of harvest system on ewe and subsequent lamb performance

	Harvest System			
	Precision Chop Big Ba		Bale	
Concentrate (kg in last 6 weeks of pregnancy)	18	27	18	27
Ewe condition at lambing	4.1	4.1	4.0	4.1
Lamb - birth weight (kg)	4.7	4.9	4.5	4.9
- weaning weight (kg)	33.7	34.8	32.1	32.8
	(Keady and Hanrahan 2008)			

Chop length: Unlike for beef and dairy cattle, chop length has a major impact on silage intake by sheep. Today in Ireland approximately 55 % of silage on sheep farms is ensiled in big bales. A study was undertaken at Athenry to evaluate the impact of harvest system (precision chop or big bale) on ewe and subsequent lamb performance, the results of which are presented in Table 2. Ewes offered silage during mid and late pregnancy which was precision chopped produced lambs which were 1.8 kg heavier at weaning.

Silage type

In recent years the area of maize which has been grown for ensiling has increased dramatically. Previous studies have shown that the use of maize silage increases milk yield of dairy cows and carcass gain of beef cattle by 2.1 kg per cow per day (8%) and 0.11 kg per head per day (19%), respectively. Maize can be sown in the open (sown in early May using early maturing varieties) or under the complete cover plastic mulch system (sown early April using later maturing varieties). Studies from Athenry, during 3 consecutive years, have shown that the average increase in dry matter yield was 40% due to the use of the complete cover plastic mulch system relative to growing the same variety of maize in the open.

Currently there is interest in feeding maize silage to pregnant ewes. Two studies have been completed at Athenry to compare grass silage with maize silage. Maize is lower in crude protein relative to grass silage. In both studies, some ewes received either 0 or 200 g soyabean daily from housing to lambing. The results of are summarised in Table 3. Relative to high feed value grass silage, maize silage offered without soyabean supplementation did not alter ewe condition at lambing or lamb birth or weaning weights. Soyabean supplemention increased ewe condition at lambing and tended to improve lamb birth weight. However soyabean supplementation throughout the housing period did not alter lamb weaning weight.

The effect of maturity of maize at harvest was evaluated in two studies, the results of which are presented in Table 4. The low and high dry matter maize silages were ensiled at dry matter concentrations of 200 and 293 g/kg respectively. Increasing maturity of the maize silage at harvest tended to increase ewe condition at lambing and increase lamb weaning weight by 1.1 kg.

Maize silage has lower mineral and vitamin concentrations relative to grass silage. Consequently ewes offered maize silage as the sole forage should receive 50 % extra sheep mineral and vitamin mixture relative to ewes offered grass silage to avoid risk of any deficiency.

Table 3

The effects of maize silage during late pregnancy on ewe and subsequent lamb performance

	Sila	Silage Type		
	Grass	Mai	Maize	
Soyabean meal (g/day)	0	0	200	
Ewe condition at lambing	3.8	3.5	4.0	
Lamb – birth weight (kg)	mb – birth weight (kg) 4.7 4.5		4.9	
- weaning weight (kg)	33.4	33.6	33.3	
(Keady and Hanrahan 2008, 200		08, 2009)		

Table 4

The effects of maturity of maize at harvest on ewe and subsequent lamb performance

	Maize silage dry matter at harvest (g/kg)	
. <u></u>	200	293
Ewe condition at lambing	3.7	3.8
Lamb – birth weight (kg)	4.7	4.7
- weaning weight (kg)	32.7	33.8
	(Keady and Ha	anrahan 2008, 2009)



Concentrate Feed level

Silage feed value (as influenced by digestibility, chop length and intake characteristics) and litter size are the major factors affecting the amount of concentrate supplementation required in late pregnancy. When supplementing ewes the objective is to produce heavy lambs (which will lamb unassisted) and having adequate supplies of colostrum.

With good quality silage there is no benefit to feeding excess concentrate to ewes in late pregnancy. However with medium feed value silage increasing the amount of concentrate offered to ewes in late pregnancy increased lamb birth weight and subsequent weaning weight (Table 2).

The effects of silage feed value on concentrate requirements of twin bearing ewes in late pregnancy are presented in Table 5. Concentrate requirements are influenced by both silage digestibility and harvest system (chop length). The rate of increase in the level of concentrate supplementation required increases as silage digestibility (DMD) decreases. Furthermore as silage chop length increases, the quantity of additional concentrate required increases as digestibility declines. For example, for silages at 79 and 65 % DMD an additional 4 and 10 kg concentrate is required for long chop length silages, relative to precision chop silages respectively. For ewes carrying singles, concentrate supplementation can be reduced by 5 kg/ewe, whilst for ewes carrying triplets concentrate supplementation should be increased by 8 kg respectively.

For prolific flocks the concentrate should be formulated to contain 190 g/kg of crude protein. Soyabean is probably the best quality vegetable protein source widely available, consequently it should contribute a large proportion of the protein in concentrate offered to ewes in late pregnancy. As the quantity of concentrate offered to ewes in late pregnancy is modest (depending on silage quality) it should contain high quality energy (barley, maize meal, wheat) digestible fibre (sugar beet pulp, citrus pulp, soya hulls) and protein (soybean, rape meal, distillers) sources.

Table 5

Effects of silage quality on concentrate requirements of twin bearing ewes in late pregnancy

		Silage DMD	
	79	72	64
Precision chopped (kg/ewe)	8	12	20
Big bale/Single chop (kg/ewe)	12	20	30

Table 6

Value of feed stuffs (relative to barley and soyabean)

	<u>Cost (€/t)</u>	<u>Value (€/t)</u>
Energy Sources		
Rolled Barley	190	190
Rolled Wheat	195	190
Maize Meal	250	238
Maize Gluten	198	219
Citrus Pulp	165	165
Molasses	175	122
Soya Hulls	165	183
Protein Sources		
Soybean meal	345	345
Maize distillers	210	262
Rape seed	245	293

The current cost and the relative values of straights, relative to rolled barley at \in 190 /t and soybean at \in 345 /t are presented in Table 6. The current costs used in this paper are based on average price, collected from merchant yards, in the east and south west. Currently straights which are value for money include barley, corn gluten, distillers, soya hulls and rape seed meal. However as soybean is probably the best source of protein available it should be included to provide a large proportion of the protein in rations to be offered to ewes in late pregnancy.

Examples of simple, high quality rations are presented in Table 7. When purchasing a ration it is important to purchase on known ingredients as well as price.

Table 7

Sample concentrate mixes for ewes in late pregnancy (kg/t)	
1. 355 barley, 140 citrus pulp, 200 soya hulls, 280 soya, 25 minerals & vitamins	(19.0 % protein)
2. 200 barley, 175 maize meal, 200 citrus pulp, 100 soya hulls, 300 soya, 25 minerals & vitamins	(19.3 % protein)
3. 285 barley, 180 maize meal, 200 soya hulls, 190 soya, 120 rape seed, 25 minerals & vitamins	(18.9 % protein)
4. 375 barley, 190soya hulls, 200 maize gluten, 210 soya, 25 minerals & vitamins	(19.0 % protein)

Conclusion

- 1. Correct nutrition during late pregnancy is the foundation to flock profitability.
- 2. Grass silage feed value, as determined by digestibility and intake characteristics, is the major factor affecting ewe performance and subsequently efficiency of production, during the housing period.
- 3. Reducing silage chop length increases ewe and subsequent lamb performance.
- 4. High feed value grass silage can reduce concentrate requirement by at least 75 %, whilst maintaining animal performance.
- 5. Level of supplementation offered to ewes in late pregnancy should be based on forage quality and expected litter size.
- 6. Supplement with a concentrate containing 19% crude protein, which contains a high proportion of soya bean meal as the protein source.
- 7. Maize silage can replace grass silage. However extra mineral and vitamin supplementation is required. Also feed a concentrate with higher protein concentration (22%) in late pregnancy.



Farm Profile

Sheplands Farm Limited, Sherlockstown, Sallins, Co Kildare *by Heinz Edgert*



Sheplands Farm is a 69 ha all Grassland Farm located near Sallins in North Kildare of which 7ha is rented. All the land is in one grazing block and is divided in to 21 subdivisions. The farm is managed

by Heinz Eggert since August 1988, in the early stages was stocked with a 400 ewe mid season sheep flock and beef heifer enterprise.

In 1991 35 store heifers were identified as suitable for breeding, and a Charolais Bull was purchased and run with these heifers for spring calving. In 1992 the first Limousin Bull was purchased, and over the next few years the ewe flock was phased out, and the Suckler herd expanded to 75 mainly Limousin cross cows. The best female progeny are kept for replacements and herd expansion, the rest are fattened for a local butcher. The yearling bulls are sold to a local beef finisher.

In 2009 Sheplands Farm joined the Irish Farmers Journal / Teagasc Better Beef Program to try and improve efficiency and profitability on the farm. The Management Team met with Heinz and his local B&T Teagasc Advisor Christy Watson, a farm plan was drawn up with the aim of achieving a gross margin of €1000/ha. The Main Points of the Plan are;

A.Impove Output:

When the farm joined the programme stocking rate was 1.85 LU/ha the target is to increase to 2 LU/ha+ cow numbers are planned to increase to 90. The yearling bulls which were previously sold in Spring are now finished to beef .These bulls are grazed from March to June and then housed on an ad lib meal diet plus straw to be finished out of the shed in September/ October, before the rest of the cattle are housed.

B. Variable Cost:

Concentrate and Straw costs were identified as two variable costs which had to be reduced. To this end cereals will be purchased from local Tillage Farmers rolled and treated with prop corn. To reduce straw usage and costs, a straw blower has been purchased, as most of the sheds on the farm are straw bedded sheds. Cows at calving were in very good body condition, with some cows in too good condition. Meal feeding after calving will be reduced with meals targeted to the calves through creep feeding.

C. Genetics- Breeding

Genetics have always been seen as a major priority on the farm and Heinz uses some DIY AI in conjunction with a 5 Star Limousin Stock Bull to produce top quality stock for the home or export market. As a result of sourcing breeding replacements from within the herd cows are mainly Limousin with most cows three guarter or 7/8 bred . The Management Team suggested to Heinz to use some other continental breeds through AI, to improve weight gains through hybrid vigour. Fertility within the herd was excellent with a good tight calving pattern, producing excellent quality calves. The breeding performance of the herd and quality of stock produced were two of the main strengths identified by the Better Farm Management Team.

Heinz finds the ICBF Herd Plus Reports as one of the most important management tools when it comes to selecting replacements. The latest ICBF Herd Plus Beef Calving report shows the herd with a calving interval of 374 days (National average 406 days), and calves produced per cow per year of 0.93 (National average 0.78)

D. Animal Health:

Despite the fact that mortality on the farm is very low with calves dead at birth averaging 1.1% (National average 4.8%),good animal health is seen as a high priority in the farm plan to increase profitability. Through blood sampling, faecal sampling, ear notching and various other tests, the health status of the herd was established.

BVD was identified as a major problem on the farm with 8 weanlings identified as PI's (Percistently Infected), even though the herd had been vaccinated for BVD. Cows are also vaccinated for Leptospirosis. A farm specific herd health plan

specific herd health plan h a s since been drawn up with protocols now in place for disease prevention and control. All calves at birth are now tested for BVD using the Enfer Ear Tag Test,this testing will continue for 12 months after the last PI has been identified.

liarin Focus

E. Grassland Management:

Heinz always believed that good grassland management is one of the most important drivers of profitability on Irish stock farms. To make best use of the cheapest feed Heinz has been measuring grass growth for the last 7 years. Heinz attended a grassland management course run by Leonie Forster and Paul Bird, two grassland advisers from New Zealand. Heinz inputs weekly grass measurements into the Teagasc grass computer programme. Grassland management decisions are based on the results of grass measurements. Between 10 and 15% of the total farm area is reseeded every year. Heinz carefully chooses varieties of the seed mixture's to ensure the suitability of the variety's to the soil type and production system.

Heinz is delighted to be part of the Better Farm Beef Program as it has given him the opportunity to discuss management decisions with the program advisor Adam Woods as well as his local B&T Teagasc Advisor Christy Watson. The Gross margin has significantly improved through the Program and Sheplands Farm will hopefully reach the target by the end of year three.



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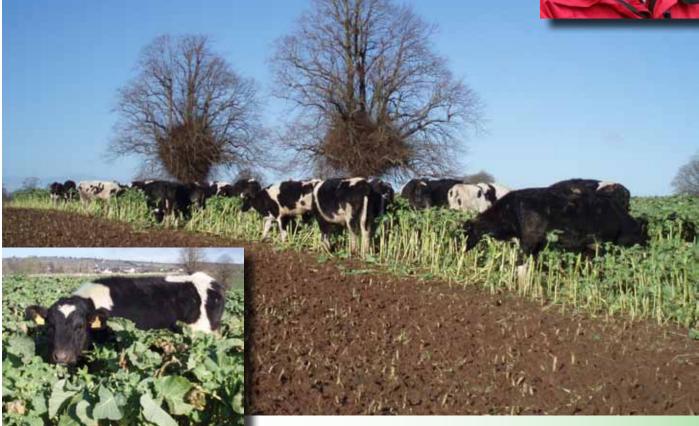
Grazing Kale This Winter

Emer Kennedy

Grassland Science Research Department, Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc, Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork

Kale crops should be well grown with grazing targeted from early November onwards. Before heifers start to graze the kale crop decisions need to be made – the first of these is the direction in which the kale will be grazed. A long narrow strip is much more desirable than a short wide strip. The long narrow strip improves utilisation and is easier to manage as the wire will only have to be moved in as far as the kale on a daily basis rather than in through the crop. Once the wire is moved in to the edge of the kale the animals will graze under the wire ensuring high levels of utilisation. Always ensure that fresh water is available.





Another consideration when grazing kale during the winter is mineral requirements. Before allocating animals to the kale crop they should all be given a bolus that will supply adequate minerals for the winter season. The bolus should contain sufficient levels of copper, selenium, cobalt and iodine. Mineral licks can be provided as an alternative, however, the amount each heifer consumes can never be guaranteed, and therefore it is preferable to use a bolus.

Regardless of diet (100% kale or 70% kale and 30% silage), for the first week when introduced to the crop all animals should be offered a fibre source to help them adapt to the kale diet. Poorer quality bales of silage or straw are ideal during the first week to ensure that the animals 'develop a taste' for the kale and do not preference the silage. Even if you are feeding a 100% kale diet it is necessary to feed a fibre source for the first week.

If there is continuous frost (similar to last winter) animals will have to be supplemented with additional feed such as grass silage. Frosted kale should not be fed to animals as there is a risk of bloat occurring. Frosted plant cells of the brassica plant may become more fragile and break down more quickly in the rumen. A more rapid breakdown of the plant cells means a more rapid fermentation in the rumen, more gas and acid production and a greater risk of bloat. Waiting for the frost to lift from the crop and feeding more fibre will reduce risk of frost bloat.

For the past two winters Moorepark weanling heifers have been out-wintered on kale. Heifers have been offered a 70% kale and 30% baled silage diet or a 100% kale diet. In the Moorepark experiments there has been no difference in terms of weight gain or fertility performance between the 70% kale and 100% kale diets. Furthermore, these heifers have outperformed those on silage diets indoors and have had equal performance to those indoors on a silage and 1.5 kg concentrate diet.

Regardless of wintering system early spring grass should be prioritised for weanling heifers. Grass is cheaper than any of the winter feeds and weight gains of greater than 1 kg/day are achievable, while maximum weight gains indoors are closer to 0.7 kg/day.

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Philip Donohue President Dairy Farmer



Padraig French Vice President Head of Livestock systems Department & Dairy Enterprise Leader



Maura Callery Office Manager



Andrew Cromie IGA Council Member Geneticist ICBF



Bridget Lynch IGA Council Member Lecturer Grass & Forage UCD



Deirdre Hennessy IGA Council Member Grassland Research **Officer Teagasc**



Donal Coleman IGA Council Member Head of Division and Senior Inspector DAFF



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Jack Kennedy IGA Council Member Dairy Editor Irish Farmers Journal



William Kingston IGA Council Member Dairy farmer



Michael Doran IGA Council Member Suckler to beef farmer and IFA livestock chairman



Kevin Twomey IGA Council Member **Dairy Farmer**



Pat Weeks IGA Council Member Dairy farmer



Bernard Ging IGA Council Member Suckler to beef farmer Member of the BETTER farm



Paul Crosson IGA Council Member Research Officer **Teagasc Grange**



Padraig Mulligan IGA Council Member Dairy farmer



Eddie O'Donnell IGA Council Member Dairy Farmer



IGA Council Member Director of Agriculture Research Teagasc



Heinz Eggert IGA Council Member Suckler to beef farmer Member of the BETTER farm programme



Ger Murphy IGA Council Member Suckler to weanling farmer Member of the BETTER farm programme



Anne-Marie Flanagan IGA Regional Development Officer Dairy Farmer



Donal Callery IGA Regional Development Officer Farm Manager/Consultant

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Gerard McBrien IGA Regional Development Officer Beef Farmer



New Co-opted council members



Darren Carthy: Darren comes from a mixed farming background in Galway. Before taking up the role of Sheep and Beef Reporter in the Irish Farmers Journal, Darren previously worked with Teagasc in Galway. His role in the Farmers Journal is to inform and advise farmers on markets and management issues that will positively influence their enterprises and increase potential profit. John Fagan: John is a full time sheep farmer in Westmeath. He farms 180 hectares with 1200 ewes. He is a big advocate of out door lambing systems and aims to build up his flock up to 1500 ewes over the coming year, finishing all lambs off grass. He graduated from UCD in 2001 with a degree in Agri- Business and Rural Development and in 2002 he won a Nuffield Scholarship where he highlighted the lack of traceability in South American Beef production. Having travelled extensively, John believes that efficient grassland management can reap massive benefits for Irish farmers whether in Beef, Sheep or Dairying. He is absolutely delighted to play his role in the Irish Grassland Association at encouraging and developing progressive farming techniques in Irish Agriculture.

John Kelly: John Kelly is farming 57ha in Baltinglass Co Wicklow. He is married to Caroline and they have three children. John qualified from Harper Adams Agricultural College in 2001 with an honours degree in Agriculture with animal science. Since then he has worked on dairy farms, potato farms and spent three years working in the thorough bred horse industry. Upon returning to work at home on his father's suckler and tillage farm john started a sheep flock. It now stands at 620 breeding sheep. He is a member of the BETTER farm program and puts a lot of emphasis on his grassland management. For example in 2010 95% of lambs were finished without any concentrates. His future plan is to maximise profit from a grass based system

Retiring Council Members



David McGilloway: David retired from council following completion of a 10 year term on council. David held the honorary position of editor of the Annual Irish Grassland Association Journal. David works with DAFF in his new area of Pesticide registration division. John Renehan: John retired from council following completion his co-opted term on council. John is a sheep farmer from Kilkenny and we were delighted when he hosted the Irish Grassland Association National Sheep Conference in 2009.

Andrew Moloney: Andrew retired from council after completing 6 years of service. Commenting on his retirement Andrew said "I'm continuing sheep and suckler farming in Edenderry Co. Offally. Outside of faming life, I enjoy spending time with my family, especially following up with the progress of my children in football and rugby."

Nicholas McGill: Nicholas retired from council following his retirement from the Department of Agriculture Food and Forestry. Commenting on his retirement Nicholas said. "I'm continuing to follow with interest in all developments in the world of agriculture, particularly those with which I had a long association while in the DAFF namely sheep breeding, direct payments and crop variety evaluation. Family life keeps me busy, especially ferrying the boys here and there to football (gaelic and soccer), athletics and music. My very best wishes to IGA in the years ahead."

Michael Gottstein: Michael retired from the Irish Grassland Association council following completion of 2 years of a 3 year term. Michael now continues his work as a Teagasc B&T adviser in Kerry.

Jan Fredericks: Jan retired from council after completing 8 years of service. Jan was the president of the Irish Grassland Association in 2005/6. Jan continues to manage a dairy farm in County Wexford.

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Student Conference Review October 4th 2010



On October 4th the IGA held its first student event in Kildalton College which was sponsored by FBD insurance. The event was one of its kind in that it was also a first for third level students from University College Dublin, Waterford Institute of Technology and Teagasc Colleges to be brought together with one aspiration – advancement in new grassland technologies and options for expansion in the dairy sector. There were over 160 delegates altogether including students, lecturers and staff.



The day began with a morning conference with four excellent guest speakers:

- The Three Tools to Grass Budgeting Dr. Gráinne Hurley, Dairy Advisor, Teagasc
- Profit from grass a farmers perspective -Eddie O'Donnell, Dairy Farmer, Golden, Tipperary
- Benefits of sward renewal Philip Creighton, Grassland Science Research Department, Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc Moorepark
- Greenfield dairy programme and options for expansion Adrian Van Bysterveldt, Livestock Systems Research Department, Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Teagasc Moorepark

Each presentation was very well received by the audience with questions and discussion on various topics including farmers experience of on/off grazing, autumn grassland management, merits of spring reseeding, selecting a grass seed mixture, cost of reseeding and the importance of technology uptake in an expanding dairy sector.

Student Conference Review October 4th 2010 Cont'd

In the afternoon students travelled to the dairy farm of James and Sinead Walsh, Kilmurray Lodge, Carrick-on-Suir for a farm walk which was chaired by Kevin Twomey with excellent input from Adrian Van Bysterveldt. The farm walk began with James introducing the history of the family farm, the ownership of which he took over from his parent Pat and Siobhan in 2008. The students got an overview of how and why James got involved with the Greenfield Dairy Programme, five year financial projections and how the farm has progressed to date increasing cow numbers from 134 in 2008 to >250 in 2010. Grazing infrastructure developments, new paddock layout, day to day grassland management and reseeding plans were all discussed before students walked back to the farmyard for an overview of the new farmyard layout. There students got the chance to walk around the new 35 aside milking parlour and stock handling facilities, lagoon, wintering pad and silage slab. Students asked an array of questions on project management, loan security and the management of the cows in the new parlour.

Before departure to Dublin, Ballyhaise, Clonakilty and Kildalton the Walsh's served a very welcome cup of tea and coffee and homemade scones and cakes for the road home which enable students to mix and discuss the day's events.



IGA Council members Pat Weeks and Kevin Twomey making a presentation to host farmer James Walsh



Bridget Lynch, Pat Weeks, Eddie O'Donnell, Kevin Twomey & Maura Callery

Irish Grassland council member shines in Dairy Farmer of Year competition

By Jack Kennedy IGA Council member and Irish Farmers Journal

Pat and Olive Weeks are farming just outside Kilfinane in South Limerick. Many dairy farmers recently visited this family farm during July for the Irish Grassland Dairy Summer Tour. Pat is also a member of the Irish Grassland Association council. Last month Pat and Olive were crowned Southern Regional winners in the IDB Dairy Farmer of the Year 2010 competition in association with the Irish Farmers Journal. Noel and Bernadette O Toole from Kilimor. Co Gawlay were crowned overall winners. Noel and Pat have kindly agreed to speak at the Irish Grassland Association Annual Dairy Conference in Cork on Wednesday 12 January, 2011

In 100% spring production the Weeks family milked 125 cows supplying 505,000 litres (111,000 gallons) to Kerry Co-op in 2009.The judges remarked that Weeks family drive to improve and their determination to put the right cow and quality of grass in place to deliver excellent results was one of the key reasons why this family farm was shortlisted for this competition.

Up until 2007 Pat Weeks was working full time as an Engineer in Limerick. In 2007 he decided to leave his permanent, full time position to go dairy farming full time. Up until then Olive was looking after every day family and farm work with a full time assistant manager until 2004 and part time help after that.

Pat explained, "I love farming and it's a great way of family life. While I enjoyed working as an Electronic engineer I realised that my ladder was up against the wrong wall. Now I know it's up against the right wall as farming is what I always wanted."

At the start of the milk quota regime in 1984 this hilly Kilfinane farm held a quota for 127,000 litres (28,000 gallons) with 58 grazing acres and a herd of 32 Al bred cows. The herd was built up to 70 cows in 1997 while Pat was working full time. Since then through a series of ongoing farm leases and purchases the Weeks family have built up the family business. Today they are farming 135 hectares (333 acres) with a 44 hectare milking platform (108 acres) and milking 125 cows on the home farm and owned quota of 505,000 litres (111,000 gallons).

In 2009 milk delivered to Kerry Co-op was 4,174 litres per cow (344 kg milk solids per cow or 1,204 kg milk solids per hectare).



Kevin Lane I.D.B., Southern Winners Pat & Olive Weeks, Co. Limerick and Matt Dempsey, Editor I.F.J.



Noel O'Toole (with his award winning trophy) who will speak at the Irish Grassland Association Dairy Conference in Cork on Wed 12th January 2011.

We would like to thank the Irish Farmers Journal for all their supporting photos

Succession Planning workshop review

By Anne-Marie Flanagan

The Irish Grassland Association held a Succession Planning workshop on the 28th of September 2010 in Kilkenny Mart which was organized and chaired by Anne-Marie Flanagan, Regional Development Officer. The workshop was free to Members and their families. 26 members attended and the audience was a mix of young and old.

The first speaker was Clare O Keeffe of Succession Ireland, based in Mallow Co Cork. Clare helps farming families to sit down with each other and resolve conflicts within the family and help with the succession process. She says "it's a very emotional journey for all involved and has to be taken slowly". Clare is a dairy farmer herself so has great understanding of where everyone is coming from. Our second speaker was Aisling Meehan, a solicitor and Tax consultant from Newmarket on Fergus. Aislings' family are dairy farmers in Co. Clare and she has a lot of experience in the family farm succession area.

Clare began the work shop with the question to those nearing retirement as to where they wanted to live when they retired and for many years after this. Clare discussed how people

"research shows that we remember the fiver we lost better than the fiver we were given"

react to this question. The first response is that they don't see themselves living anywhere else but their present home but the reality of getting old can mean that many years later they may change their minds. This change of mind can be costly to the younger generation at times and she urged that people think seriously about this. She also mentioned the difference in genders answers to this question. Most men don't see it as a question for them but surprisingly enough when you get into a conversation with many of the women involved, they have an idea of a small bungalow being built on the farm or a house in town. This highlights the reason as to why Clare not only speaks to the family as a whole but also talks to them individually.

Clare spoke about the typical Irish father-son relationship and how important this relationship is when it comes to the succession of the farm. She advised couples with young children to always praise their children, especially in their work on the farm. She explained that this will lead to a respect between parents and children and will lead to children respecting parents later in life which will make things easier when hard decisions need to be made. She sees everyday the issues between the 2 generations and puts these difficult relationships down to lack of respect and understanding between the generations.

In the area of wills and inheritance, Clare explained the dangers of trying to treat everyone equally. It is not a simple process and if in the end if everyone felt treated fairly that this is the best you can hope for. Unfortunately there will always be a time where people will feel that they were not treated fairly and this can then lead to family disputes and costly solicitors. This can destroy any inheritance left. Aisling Meehan then took us through examples where wills were contested and the consequences of this, both personally and financially. Some of the examples she gave were extremely interesting. We then went on to talk about the issue between a successor and their siblings and how to manage this situation. Both Aisling and Clare gave us lots of examples where the current economic climate has seen the return of many unemployed engineers and tradesmen and what this now means for the one who has being at home developing the farm for the past 10 years. Some of this was eye opening to many in the audience and drove home the idea of having a well thought out succession plan to protect all involved.

From there we moved on to marriage breakdowns and the consequences on the family and the successor when this happens in either an older generation or a young generation. Aisling then took us through the proposed Civil Law partnership and the consequences for co-habitating couples and for children in these relationships. Many of the details in this act surprised many at the workshop and are definitely thought-provoking.



Aisling, who is also a tax consultant, took us through the relevant taxes associated with land transfer but both her and Clare urged people not to race into things because of the stamp duty relief available to under 35's. Getting the succession plan right is much more important. Transfer land should only take place when both generations are agreed and feel secure in the plan.

Clare left us with the thought that research shows that we remember the fiver we lost better than the fiver we were given. She explained that that an individual can carry the loss of a farm for their entire life. Which only goes to highlight the need for people to think long and hard about succession now no matter what your stage in life is? Aim to make every one feel they have being treated fairly, but not necessarily equally!!

The day ended with a lot of discussion between both generations in the audience who were keen to get the others opinion. A huge part of the day was taken up with great examples of cases that Clare and Aisling have being involved and these were a great way to get people in the room to relate to their own situation.

We received great feed back from this event and it was surprising the different bits that everyone took home with them.

Regional financial analysis morning review

By Anne-Marie Flanagan

The Irish Grassland Association held their Regional Financial Analysis Morning in Kilkenny in late October .The event was sponsored by IFAC and AIB and a crowd off over 90 farmers and industry people attended to hear speakers from IFAC, AIB and the Irish Farmers Journal. This was the second recent regional event in the south east and was an admission free event. The event was organized by Anne-Marie Flanagan Regional Development officer for the IGA for the South East

The first speaker was Eoghan Drea, Branch manager of IFAC Dungarvan. Eoghan out lined IFAC's Ten step Progressive Tax plan and also outlined IFAC s thoughts on the coming budget some of which sent chills through the room. The tax plan included looking at items such as Stock relief, income averaging, pensions, investment and other relief's all with the view of reducing your tax burden. Eoghan also out lined the Advantages and



disadvantage of setting up a Limited company. The main areas where Eoghan felt Irish farmers should be concerned about, regarding this year's budget, were changes to Stock relief, Capital gains tax and Agricultural relief. Eoghan gave a very clear concise presentation and gave excellent answers to questions from the floor.

Shane Harrington, business development officer from IFAC in Cahir, was the second speaker of the day. Shane outlined how to get the most out of your farm accounts. He also out lined the services provided by IFAC to help people both understand and keep their accounts up dated. He outlined the use of their financial management report through using their comparative analysis so as to identify KPI's for your business. He also outlined the Dairy management report they use and its uses. Shane showed us how IFAC would work out repayment capacity and he stressed the importance of not just looking at one year of accounts.

The third speaker was AIB s Tadhg Buckley, Agri advisor based in Mallow, Co. Cork and who is also a dairy farmer. Tadhg gave an excellent presentation and confirmed AIB's commitment to the Agri sector. He also showed us the extent of the understanding that he and fellow Agri advisors have of the Agri industry. Tadgh began his presentation by out lining the present economic climate and its relevancy to the Agri sector. He admitted that it is only in very recent months that most farmers have come back into credit from 2009. He confirmed that investment is still taking place on farm and AIB are still lending to those that demonstrate they can handle the debt.

Advice for meeting your bank manger from Tadhg was: Be D

- The key points AIB take in to consideration when some one is seeking finance are
- Repayment capacity based on 3 years of accounts
- Farm profitability Trend
- Level of Security required,
- Farmers track record
- Liquidity
- Purpose of the loan
- Ability to control drawings was also some thing that banks where looking at.

Grasses for the Future review

By Deirdre Hennessy Teagasc & IGA council member

The Grasses for the Future Conference was held in the Silversprings Hotel, Cork on the 14th October and Moorepark Conference Centre on the 15th October 2010. Almost 200 delegates attended Day 1 of the event which took the form of a conference. The audience was drawn from the right across the grassland industry and included breeders, evaluators, farmers, researchers, advisors, members of the seed industry and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and included international delegates from New Zealand, United States of America, UK, Northern Ireland, Denmark, Germany and Holland.

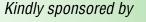
Nine papers were presented on Day 1, which was divided into four sessions with two papers in each of the first three sessions, and three papers in session four. Session 1 dealt with the 'Ideal Grass' for grass based livestock production in Ireland, and the gains that have been made in yield and persistency through grass breeding and selection over the last 40 years. Session 2 focussed on 'Breeding Grasses for the Future'. The priority traits required from grass were outlined and some of the methods available to breed and select for traits were described. After lunch, session 3 described how the best grasses can be identified using variety evaluation and an economic index for grass cultivar selection. The final session of Day 1 focussed on industry uptake of grass breeding progress. The economics of reseeding were discussed, as well as mixture construction, and the marketing of improved grass varieties. Michael Caslor, USDA, gave an excellent overall summary of the key points raised throughout the day.

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prepared! Know basic farm details, have up to date finanicals, list of borrowings and repayments, off farm income and amount of drawings. Tadgh also emphasized the need for a simple business plan when approaching the bank. Tadgh outlined his own thoughts on the possibility of a superlevy situation and suggested that dairy farmers should look at having a plan b in the event of one. He concluded by saying that 2010 was a good year for farmers despite farms only emerging from 2009 difficulties now and reminded us that agriculture will continue to be an integral part of AIB business.

The Final speaker of the morning was Irish Framers Journals' money mentor Peter Young. Peter gave an energetic presentation but spoke simply and got some great points across to the audience. Peter helped us identify who in our lives is important to keep happy and most importantly don't forget about your self. He highlighted that there are many things inside the farm gate that we can address to improve our situation. Peter asked the audience how many of them where updating cash flows on a monthly basis and only a very small amount were. Peter went on to out line the main parts of doing a cash flow budget and the importance of up dating it on at least a monthly basis. He also stressed the importance of entering data based on when money actually came in and out of the account but most importantly he urged us to react to what it tells you.

There were a lot of questions to all of the speakers on the day which showed the great interest and need for such an event. The event was chaired by Irish Grassland Association President Phillip Donohoe and was kindly sponsored by IFAC and AIB.







Some of the large delegation of IGA council members at the Grasses for the future international conference

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Moorepark Conference Centre hosted Day 2 of the conference. Trevor Gilliland, AFBI, Northern Ireland, gave a brief summary of Day 1 to refresh everyone of the topics discussed. This was followed by three discussion openers from a farmer – Kevin Twomey (farmer and IGA Council member) who described his requirements from grass, an advisor – John Maher, Teagasc Specialist Advisor, who provided an extension view on the requirements from grass and a researcher – Emer Kennedy, Moorepark, who briefly presented results from a stakeholder survey undertaken before the conference. The delegates were then divided into 11 groups. Each group had a facilitator and discussed 3 topics over the course of about 1.5 hours. The topics were:

- Farm level requirements for the future
- Breeding and evaluation requirements to meet farm level requirements
- Developing better economic indicators, e.g. to promote reseeding, to promote confidence in a variety evaluation index

The discussion groups provided each delegate the opportunity to express his/her views on grass breeding and evaluation, and requirements for the future. The feedback from the groups was then compiled and a roundtable discussion took place. After lunch field trips took place to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Crop Evaluation site at Ballyderown Farm to see grass evaluation trials and to the Moorepark Grassland Research Programme.

There was a large attendance IGA council members and IGA members at the conference. IGA council members were also involved in the conference - Andrew Cromie chaired Session 3 on Day 1; Kevin Twomey described his requirements from grass; Pierce Kelly, Padraig French, Jack Kennedy and John Donworth were group facilitators on Day 2 and Deirdre Hennessy was one of the conference organisers.

The conference was organised by Teagasc, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and AFBI, Northern Ireland and was sponsored by the Irish Grassland Association, Germinal Seeds, Goldcrop, More Grass Ireland and Barenburg.

The proceedings and presentations from the conference can be viewed at: http://www.agresearch.teagasc.ie/moorepark/publications/publications_c.asp

Irish Grassland Association (IGA) Annual Dairy Conference 2011, in Meath and Cork



Sponsored by Pfizer Animal health

The Irish Grassland Associations' annual Dairy Conference will take place in two venues this year, Navan on Tuesday 11th January (a 1/2 day conference) and Cork on Wednesday 12th January. This is in response to the surge in membership that the association has enjoyed in the past 2 years, especially in the Northern part of the country.

The conference theme is entitled "Planning for Post Quota's", with an excellent line-up of farmer and industry speakers. Themes that will be carried over the 2 days include; (i) Planning and managing spring grazing: How to increase grass utilisation at farm level, (ii) keeping valuable heifer calves alive, key pointers from farmers and research, and (iii) managing super-levy risk, including an in depth financial analysis of the various options open to farmers. Once again the conference is kindly sponsored by Pfizer Animal Health.

Commenting on the event, Philip Donohoe (IGA President) noted that the IGA Dairy conference is acknowledged as delivering high quality, independent, technical material in a farmer friendly environment. "Over the years we have succeeded in creating the correct blend of farmer and industry speakers and this year is no different, with 4 farmers speakers in the line-up and 4 people from research and industry. In addition we are delighted to welcome 3 recent winners from high profile competitions to the Cork event, Noel O'Toole, Dairy Farmer of the Year, Dr Sean McNamara, ABC Nutrition and Denis Carroll, Ring of Kerry Quality Lamb Producers. Each of these will give their unique insights and principles into how we can achieve high business performance within our farm gate.

Speaking on behalf of the sponsors, Roy Geary, Pfizer Animal Health, welcomed the move to hosting the event at two centres. "Getting strong technical messages to more localised venues is an important new development for the IGA. Farmers, especially those in winter milk, are busy at this time of year. By creating this new event in the North East, the IGA is responding to its growing membership needs and this is to be welcomed. Once again, we are delighted to be involved in the conference and look forward to an excellent 2 days in both Navan and Cork.

The full conference will take place in Morans Silver Springs Hotel in Cork on Wednesday 12th January and this will be preceded on Tuesday 11th with a half day conference in the Ardboyne Hotel, Navan. For Irish Grassland Association (IGA) members, tickets are \in 30 for the Navan conference and \in 50 for the Cork conference. You can register online **www.irishgrassland.com**, register by post to Registrations, Irish Grasslands Associations, Cookstown, Co. Meath or you can call Maura in our office on (087) 9626483 and prepay before Thursday 6th January to avail of these discounted rates. Please note that registrations after this date will incur a \in 10 surcharge. Conference fee includes; attendance, copy of the "full day" conference papers proceeding and refreshments on arrival and two course dinner. Tickets for non-members are \in 60 for the Navan event and \in 100 for the Cork event, with each of these incurring a \in 20 surcharge for late registrations after 6th January. Please note that as, part of its initiative to attract new members, the conference fee for non members also includes one year's FREE membership to the IGA (for all new d/d memberships). So, if you are a non member and thinking of attending, then don't miss out on this excellent offer!

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Emer Kennedy

DAY 1: IGA (half day) Dairy Conference Tuesday, 11th January 2011

Ardboyne Hotel, Dublin Road, Navan, Co. Meath

Members \in 30 online/prepaid discounted rate (or \in 40 for payments on the day) Non Members \in 60 online/prepaid discounted rate (or \in 80 for payments on the day)

(0)	± 00 for payments on the day
10.00am	Registration, with light refreshments
	on arrival (Included in conference fee)
10.45am	Philip Donohoe President of the IGA -
	Opening Address
Session 1	Title:
	Tools for increasing grass utilisation.
Chairperson:	Kevin Twomey, Dairy Farmer, Ballyhooley, Cork.
11.00 am	Niall O Loughlin, Dairy farmer, Kildare.
11.20 am	Aidan Bugler, Teagasc B&T adviser, Co Clare.
11.40 am	Discussion
12.15 pm	Lunch (2 course dinner included in conference fee)
Session 2	Title: Short and medium term issues
	facing dairy farmers.
Chairperson:	Padraig French, Teagasc, Moorepark.
1.15 pm	100% live heifer calves at 28 days.
	Is it possible?
	<i>Emer Kennedy</i> , Teagasc, Moorepark
1.35 pm	The threat of super-levy.
	Options for the next 2-3 years?
	<i>Laurence Shalloo,</i> Teagasc, Moorepark
1.55 pm	Discussion
2.30 pm	Close of conference

DAY 2: IGA (full day) Dairy Conference Wednesday, 12th January 2011

Silver Springs Hotel, Cork

Members \in 50 on line/prepaid discount (\in 60 for payment on the day) Non Members \in 100 online/prepaid discount (\in 120 for payment on the <u>day</u>)

9.00am	Registration with light refreshments on
	arrival (Included in conference fee)
10.00am	Philip Donohoe President of the IGA -
	Opening Address
Session 1	Title: Tools for increasing grass utilisation.
Chairperson:	Kevin Twomey,
	Dairy Farmer, Ballyhooley, Cork.
10.15am	Niall O Loughlin, Dairy farmer, Kildare.
10.35am	Aidan Bugler,
	Teagasc B&T adviser, Co Clare.
10.55am	Discussion
Session 2	Title: 100% live heifer calves at 28 days.
	Is it possible?
Chairperson:	Andrew Cromie, ICBF.
11.30am	Peter Duggan,
	Dairy farmer, Kanturk, Co. Cork
11.50am	Emer Kennedy , Teagasc, Moorepark
12.10pm	Discussion
12.45pm	Lunch (2 course dinner, included in conference fee)
Session 3	Title: How to achieve excellent business
	performance. Some thoughts from recent
	winners of high profile competitions.
Chairperson:	Pat Weeks,
	Dairy Farmer, Kilfinane, Limerick.
2.00pm	Denis Carroll, Ring of Kerry Quality Lamb
0.10	Producers, JFC Innovation Award Winner.
2.10pm	Sean McNamara, ABC Nutrition, Enterprise
	Ireland Small Business Award Winner.
2.20pm	Noel O Toole, Galway, Irish Dairy Board &
	Irish Farmers Journal
0.00	Dairy Farmer of the Year Award Winner.
2.30pm	Discussion
Session 4	Title: The threat of super-levy;
Chaiman	Options for the next 2-3 years?
Chairperson:	Padraig French, Teagasc, Moorepark.
3.00pm	Crookstown Discussion Group
3.15pm	Laurence Shalloo, Teagasc, Moorepark
3.40pm	Discussion
4.15pm	Close of conference

Conference fee includes: attendance, copy of papers proceeding from the "full day" conference, refreshments on arrival and two course dinner. For non-members, conference fee is also is inclusive of one year's membership FREE to the IGA (for all new d/d memberships)







"....a hidden <mark>beasu</mark>re

Special Offers for IGA Members

In man

"Somewhere Special.....

2 Nights Bed & Full Irish Killerig breakfast, including a three Course Dinner in Season's Restaurant from only €99pps. 3rd night free for reservations made before February

1 Night Bed & Full Irish Killerig Breakfast from only €35pps

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The Irish Grassland Association (IGA)

have teamed up with the four star Killerig Resort Hotel in Co. Carlow

to offer our members some great value winter warming breaks, in addition to an opportunity to win a luxury weekend break away for two people.

The stylish four star Killerig Resort, Carlow offers unsurpassed hospitality to all that pass through its doors. Ideal for Families, Spa or Golf Breaks, Weddings, Corporate Meetings or Events, the Killerig Resort Carlow offers elegance, luxury and style to all. Visitors will be charmed to return again and again by its charm and attentive personal service. The Hotel boasts 42 deluxe rooms and suites, all with balconies with breath-taking views overlooking the 18 Hole Championship Golf Course, and the surrounding Killeshin Hills and Wicklow Mountains. The 47 Self Catering Lodges complete the Resort ranging from 3 – 5 bedrooms with configurations of doubles, twins and single bedrooms. All guests have full access to the Killerig Leisure Centre compromising of a 16 meter Swimming Pool, Jacuzzi, Ladies & Gents Sauna and Steam Room and fully equipped gymnasium. And not to mention a range of organic treatments are on offer in the Killerig Resort Spa for a really special pampering.

We always welcome and encourage your thoughts and suggestions on how we can make the Irish Grassland Association more informative and interesting to our members. To be in with a chance to win this luxury break send your suggestions into our office and the best suggestion wins the prize.

You can email your suggestions: To secretary@irishgrassland.com (subject: IGA competition followed by your name) You can also post your suggestions too: IGA members free competition, Irish Grassland Association, Cookstown, Kells, Co. Meath. By January 26th 2011.

Win Win Win

The Luxury Weekend Break Prize consists of:

- 2 night's accommodation for two people sharing for midweek winter breaks
 - Complimentary upgrade to a superior suite for our lucky winner for breaks before the end of February 2011
- Full Irish Killerig Breakfast each morning
 - 3 Course evening meal in Season's Restaurant on an evening of your choice
- Full access to the Killerig Leisure Centre compromising of a 16 meter Swimming Pool, Jacuzzi, Ladies & Gents Sauna and Steam Room and fully equipped gymnasium.