



IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION

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

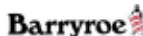
Newsletter Issue No. 15. May 2012



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Contact the Irish Grassland Association office today...

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CORPORATE MEMBERS 2012



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IGA PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Dear Member,

After a very benign winter and early spring we are enduring very cold and wet weather currently for late April, which is a critical time in the grazing season for most classes of livestock. At this point the best strategy has to be prioritising all available grass to the grazing animals, at the expense of first cut silage if necessary. If there is inadequate grass available then supplementation with concentrate and/or silage will be necessary, with the supplement used to maintain adequate farm cover to optimise growth rather than supplementing after all grass has been grazed. Hopefully we will return to more normal growth patterns soon.



In the Irish Grassland Association we are currently developing our summer schedule of events and we are very fortunate this year to have excellent grassland farmers for our sheep conference and farm walk on the 22nd May in Mullingar (page 26) and for our Dairy Summer Tour on the 26th July (page 24) in West Cork. Following our very successful reseeding event in Mayo recently we are also planning on running a number of these events around the country during the summer which will be confined to members. We are also planning a beef conference and farm walk and our annual student conference in October. Hopefully you will be able to attend one or more of these events and bring home some knowledge that will benefit your business.

I would like to thank all members who replied to our recent survey either through the post or at the dairy conference. We are currently analysing these surveys and we are quite pleased with the reaction that we got to the new developments in our last five year plan. The council of the Irish Grassland Association is currently drafting a new five year plan based on the results of the survey and we hope to publish that later this year.

One of the major developments of the last five year plan was the appointment of Regional Development Officers to work locally with members and we now want to broaden this to other regions of the country particularly in the south west and in the west of Ireland (see page 17).

Yours Sincerely,



Padraig French
President of the Irish Grassland Association 2011/12

Front page photo (taken at the Bank of Ireland Agri-seminar, Macroom, Co.Cork) L-R Mr. David Merriman, BOI Regional Manager; Pdraig French, Irish Grassland Association President (Guest Speaker); Sean Farrell, BOI; Minister Simon Coveney; Geraldine Galvin, BOI Macroom Branch Manager; Tommy Counihan, Mayor of Macroom; Mick Healy, BOI Wilton Branch Manager.

COMPETITION WINNERS

1st Place

Scott Lindsay, Cavan

1 nights B&B and dinner for 2 people at one of the Moran hotels in either Cork, London or Dublin

2nd Place

Patrick Harte, Sligo

Irish Grassland Association body warmer

3rd Place

Michael Coleman, Cork

Irish Grassland Association body warmer



RESEEDING IN WESPORT

WHAT DO THE RESEEDS LOOK LIKE NOW?

Padraig Mulligan, Irish Grassland Association council member and dairy farmer



In 2011, Goldcrop and Germinal Seeds sponsored five Irish Grassland Association reseeding events. One of those events took place on the farm of Jimmy Garrivan at the foot of Croagh Patrick in the Westport area in early August. On Wednesday 4th April the Irish Grassland Association and Teagasc Mayo hosted a revisit to the farm to discuss the performance of the reseed since last August and to discuss the importance and value of reseeding. Approximately 150 people attended this event.

Padraig Mulligan (Irish Grassland Association Council Member) gave a warm welcome to all of those attending. John Noonan (Teagasc Advisor and Irish Grassland Association Council Member) described the farm set up, including stocking rate, type of stock and the reseeding that took place last year, as well as the value obtained from the said reseeding. John compared old pasture to the new reseeded pasture and indicated that there could be an extra six tonne of grass dry matter produced per hectare on the new pasture compared to the old pasture, as well as the increased feed quality of the reseeded swards. The old permanent pasture was closed in mid-October, grazed in early March, had fertiliser applied in mid-March and had grown very little grass since then (cover on the day was approximately 700 kg DM/ha). In comparison, the sward reseeded in August was grazed in mid-September, mid-October and mid-November when it was closed, and sheep were back out grazing it in early February. On the day of the visit, the sheep were starting their third grazing of the reseeded paddock so far this year. John also spoke on the management of the sheep flock and gave a synopsis on Jimmy's involvement in the Texel Sheep Society and his focus on lamb production from grazed grass and the advantages of getting early grass into the ewe in order to cut down on costs of production.



Philip Creighton (Teagasc Researcher, Athenry) outlined the benefits of reseeding old permanent pasture, including increased grass production at the shoulders of the year, increased total production, increased feed quality, potential to carry more stock, improved nitrogen use efficiency. Philip also described the three different reseeding methods used on the farm; conventional, one pass and stitching in, indicating the advantage of each and the work involved in using each method. Philip also stressed the importance of seed bed preparation, saying that poor seed bed preparation is often the cause of unsuccessful reseeding rather than the method used. As we walked across the reseeded paddock we moved from conventional to one pass to stitching in. There is no visible

difference between the methods; all methods resulted in a very even sward which was well tillered and had clover spread throughout.

Deirdre Hennessy (Vice President of Irish Grassland Association and Teagasc Researcher, Moorepark) spoke about soil fertility, cultivar choice, the value of clover and the importance of post sowing management. Soil sampling prior to reseeding is crucial so that soil fertility problems and soil pH problems can be addressed at reseeding. Soil P and K indices of 3 must be targeted. When choosing grass seed, it is important to use cultivars from the Recommended List for Ireland or Northern Ireland. On many farms the inclusion of white clover in a grass seed mix is desirable. If clover is included in your seed mix, then the earlier the sowing the better as clover takes longer to establish and it will be pointless sowing it if it is not managed to perform in the sward. Post sowing management is crucial to ensuring good establishment of the reseeded sward. Key messages were to apply a post emergence spray approximately 5 – 6 weeks after reseeding, graze new reseeds tight and frequently, graze tightly at closing in autumn to ensure tillering over winter.

Peter Comer (Teagasc Dairy Advisor) described the management of the Jimmy's dairy herd and the advantage of having early grass to turn cows out to thereby cutting down on concentrate costs and increasing milk solids production.

Two local contractors attended and described the different stages of their reseeding methods. There was a general agreement by all the speakers that reseeding should be undertaken as early as possible in the year and certainly no later than early August especially in the West of Ireland where weather conditions are unpredictable. This will give the seeds the best chance of germinating and establishing, and ensure that a reseeded sward can be grazed before closing. All of the speakers stressed the importance of post sowing management and that having enough stock to graze reseeded swards is essential.

Padraig Mulligan thanked those who attended, and thanked in particular Jimmy Garrivan and family for welcoming us back to his farm to see the results and benefits of reseeding. Padraig also thanked the speakers and the many farmers who attended on the day. Padraig stressed the importance of the Irish Grassland Association today and in the future, he indicated that much research has

being carried by Moorepark and the many research centres around the country into the importance of good grassland management and other aspects of farming and emphasised how important it is to get this message through to farmers.



**We would like to thank
our sponsors Goldcrop
and Germinal Seeds**



Irish Grassland Association DAIRY CONFERENCES

Philip Donohoe, Irish Grassland Association council member and dairy farmer



There was an impressive line up of speakers at the Irish Grassland Association annual dairy conferences which took place at the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone on Tuesday 10th January and the following day at the Silver Springs Hotel, Cork. The theme of the day was “Managing the transition to quota abolition” and topics included managing your farm to grow more grass, the use of genomics on commercial dairy farms and once a day milking (OAD) as a quota management tool. The Cork venue also hosted a Presidential debate involving past presidents of the association.

EVENT REVIEW

The reappearance of super levy fines after they were perceived to be a thing of the past has put the plans of many dairy farmers into reverse as they struggle to avoid major fines if they supply milk over their allotted quotas. Six farmers, Joseph Leonard, Melvin Mooney, Neil O’Sullivan, Ann Moore, Michael McCarthy, Shane Phelan and Moorepark research scientist Laurence Shaloo outlined how OAD milking is minimising the treat of these fines while at the same time allowing stock numbers to grow in the run up to the abolition of milk quotas in April 2015 from which point they can increase milk deliveries by reverting to twice daily milking to maximise milk output and profit. The biggest challenge to milking cows OAD is the possible increase in SCC or mastitis. But with extra care and management this increase can be controlled and even reversed as was outlined by these farmers who all practice OAD milking.



Speakers at the second day of the Irish Grassland Association Dairy Conference with the Irish Grassland Association President, Padraig French

The amount of grass that a farm utilises per hectare has a direct correlation with the amount of profit that a farm makes according to Michael O'Donovan from Teagasc. Every extra ton of grass utilised per hectare equates to an increase in profits of €160 per hectare. To achieve high utilisation rates farmers need to have their soil fertility at the correct levels, reseed pastures regularly, use the best grass varieties and clover in grass seed mixes, as well as a high level of grazing management. Co. Limerick farmer John McNamara backed up the theory by demonstrating how he has greatly increased the amount of grass utilised on his farm by doing all of the above along with regular grass measuring and budgeting. He has increased grass utilisation from 9.9 tons in 2008 up to 11.7 tons in 2011.

Breeding the right cow or use of the correct genetics is a vital cog in the whole system of sustainable dairy farming. The discovery of genomics or DNA profiling of animals has been the single biggest revelation in animal breeding since the introduction of artificial insemination. Francis Kearney, ICBF, showed how genomics has increased the EBI of bulls available to farmers by over 50 EBI points from where it would have been, thus increasing the genetic gain on farms by 50%. Kevin Downing, a Cork dairy farmer, went a step further by genomic testing his heifers last year which re ranked his stock thus allowing him to keep the very best while selling the remainder. Also as part of this breeding session Sinead McParland outlined plans to establish a next generation herd based on the very best genetics and how it will be used to monitor for any detrimental traits so these can be identified before they could have a negative impact on the national herd.

With Presidential debates being the order of the day during the last year, the IGA were not to be out done and seven past presidents took to the stage to voice their opinions on a wide range of current topics facing Irish agriculture today. The impressive line up consisted of Paddy O'Keeffe, Donal Cashman, Jim Dwyer, Mike Magan, Dan Browne, Padraig Walshe and William Kingston. These heavyweights of Irish agriculture held nothing back while giving their opinions on topics as diverse as achieving the Harvest 2020 targets, to the inadequacies of agricultural education, to the role of the Jersey bull calf.

Overall this conference continued the ethos of the Irish Grassland Association which is to advance and spread the knowledge of profitable and sustainable grassland farming by providing farmers and industry with up to date technical research information.



Past Presidents of The Irish Grassland Association who attended the Dairy Conference. Back row L-R: Andrew Cromie, Mike Magan, Jan Fredericks, Padraig Walshe, Philip Donohoe, Padraig French. Front row L-R John Donworth, Paddy O'Keeffe, Jim Dwyer, Donal Cashman and Dan Browne.

We would like to thank our sponsors



Reseeding for profit in Westport County Mayo

Jimmy and Teresa Garrivan farm 27 hectares of mostly good quality land on the shore of Clew Bay in Belclare, Westport. The holding carries 30 spring calving Holstein Friesian dairy cows plus replacements, 30 pedigree Texel ewes and 100 mid-season lambing ewes.

Dairy Herd Details

Jimmy runs a tidy herd of 30 spring calving dairy cows achieving excellent output. Over the past three years the cows averaged over 600 kg milk solids/cow/year at 3.41% protein and 3.92% fat. In old money that is a herd average milk yield of 1,750 gallons/cow, which is quite difficult to achieve with a spring calving herd. All cows are dried off just before Christmas and calving begins in February. Concentrate usage is 1.8 tons/cow, which is high, however, Jimmy carries a flock of 130 ewes that impact on the availability of grass, especially in the spring. Milk quality is excellent, with SCC levels down below 150,000 and Jimmy won a Connacht Gold Milk Quality Award in 2009 for his hard work and effort in this regard. Jimmy is milk recording and also actively uses HerdPlus so he has great information at his fingertips on overall herd performance and also on individual cows. This makes decision making much easier and more precise. Herd EBI is €108, with €72 for Fertility and €21 for Milk. The majority of cows/heifers are from sires such as KYC (Lynch), LRZ (Laurel), FOI (Nation) and RUU (Ruud). Jimmy sells surplus heifers whenever he has some available.

Jimmy's farm is on the Atlantic and is lashed with strong winds, rain and sea salt and so he prefers to get the grass grazed down with sheep or weanlings over winter; otherwise it is damaged and begins to decay. The farm is beside the sea, has fairly dry land and grass regrowth can be quite good; although it was well tested this winter! Jimmy targets pre-grazing covers of 1400 to 1500 kg DM/ha in the main grazing season. In the past Jimmy would have thought he was running short of grass if there was not 1800 kg DM/ha in the next paddock but he is now satisfied that it is better to be chasing grass rather than trying to graze strong paddocks or deal with surpluses. Concentrates are used to fill the deficits, if and when they arise. Jimmy is a member of Westport Dairy Efficiency Group and has hosted a number of group meetings over the past three years.

Ewe flock

Jimmy starts lambing on 15th February with the pedigree Texel flock lambing first and followed closely by the mid-season ewes. Jimmy joined Sheep Ireland's LambPlus this spring and is confident the information will be valuable in selecting and improving the flock in future.

The entire flock scanned to 1.6 lambs and given that 70 of the mid-season flock are Broken Mouthed Mayo Blackface ewes, this is fairly respectable. The Mayo ewes are bought off the surrounding mountains and are mated with Blackface rams to produce one crop of lambs and the ewes are culled in the factory after weaning. All lambs are finished to french weight specification, with lamb creep introduced at three weeks and used sparingly to ensure all lambs are finished early. The ewes are grazed over winter on the dairy paddocks and this spring the ewe flock received no concentrates pre-lambing as grass availability was high and there was good growth in January and February. After lambing, ewes were fed meals for three weeks to allow grass accumulate.

Reseeding

Jimmy is a great believer in reseeded pastures and has made huge savings as a result of actively reseeding a number of paddocks annually. The late autumn growth and the early spring growth on the "shoulders" has helped Jimmy to keep ewes outside on grazed grass thereby reducing the need for silage and concentrates; and it is estimated that Jimmy saved close to €2000 on the 130 ewe flock this winter and spring due to increased grass availability following reseeded.

In early August 2011 Jimmy reseeded 2.8 ha using three different reseeded methods; conventional ploughing and tilling, one pass, and stitching in the seed. The Irish Grassland Association and Teagasc Mayo held a reseeded demonstration on the farm showing the three methods in action. The grass seed mixture was a mix, Abermagic a diploid perennial ryegrass with excellent spring and autumn growth along with Chieftain white clover - a medium leaf clover suitable for sheep grazing. There was an excellent turnout at the event with over 200 farmers attending.

Jimmy grazed the reseeded pastures four weeks post seeding with 160 lambs and 15 weanlings. Lamb numbers were reduced as they became fit, weanlings were taken off in mid-October and the paddock was closed in late November. The paddock was grazed from mid-February in 2012.



Speakers at the recent reseeded event held on Jimmys farm (Jimmy on far rhs)

The Irish Grassland Association and Teagasc Mayo held a return visit to the farm on 4th April this year to examine the success of the three reseeded methods.

Key messages from the reseeded events:

1. The reseeded grew well in all methods used with no differences evident between the three methods on 4th April.
2. Planning and management by the farmer is critical to the success of a reseeded programme. Autumn reseeded needs to be completed in late July/early August.
3. The costs involved vary depending on method used, as well as the soil type/topography; amount of ground involved and how well the ground is cleaned off by either cutting or grazing in the case of the one pass and stitching in methods. Each method has its own merits and the method used must be matched to different pasture types/farm situations.
4. Soil testing is critical and correcting soil fertility deficiencies and soil pH through lime application at time of reseeded essential.
5. Post grazing management is very important. Frequent tight grazing, not allowing covers to increase beyond 1200 to 1400 kg DM/ha during the first year after reseeded, and applying N fertiliser and maintaining soil P and K indices and soil pH are crucial to the success of any reseeded.
6. The turn around time for reseeded is roughly 6-8 weeks if it is well planned.

The Irish Grassland Association and Teagasc Mayo would like to thank Jimmy and Teresa for providing their very well run farm as a venue for both events, and wish them success in the future. Also, thanks to the contractors Martin O'Malley and Danny Dolan.



Leading livestock scientist awarded for work in shaping animal nutrition



Tim Keady
Teagasc and Irish
Grassland Association
council member

One of the leading scientists responsible for shaping the livestock industry's feed and nutrition decisions has been recognised for his outstanding contribution to animal research. Tim Keady, principal research officer at the Teagasc Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, was awarded the Sir John Hammond Award at the British Society of Animal Science's annual conference at the University of Nottingham on Tuesday (24 April). Presented to those who to make a significant impact to the science or development of animal production, the award was given to Dr Keady for his work in nutritional management of cattle and sheep.

Amongst some of his many contributions to the livestock industries, Dr Keady has studied the impact of silage fermentation on beef cattle's digestion and performance and investigated ways to improve dairy cow performance from silage-based diets. During his time with the dairy research team at the Agricultural Research Institute of Northern Ireland, he worked on projects around milk composition, dry cow management and predicting silage feed values. Results from these studies contributed to 'Feed into Milk', the adopted rationing system for dairy cows in the UK and to prediction models that determine the feed value of silage. As the leader of the Beef Programme at ARINI, Dr Keady also researched breed types in terms of growth, carcass quality and meat composition, which assisted his work on improving efficiency of beef production in Ireland. Most recently at Teagasc, he has been responsible for new research and technology transfer for efficient sheep production in a subsidy-free environment. He has carried out investigations on the extended grazing of ewes during pregnancy, the impact of silage feed and is currently working on the effect of grazing-management on lamb growth and carcass quality. Ian Givens, BSAS president, said Dr Keady was a member of a select group of scientists who have the ability to both do high-class research and explain its application to farmers.

"Tim is a deserving winner if this year's award and as the first recipient from outside of the UK, it makes his achievement all the more impressive."

Accepting the award, Dr Keady, who has also lectured extensively at Queen's University Belfast and the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise, said it was vital animal scientists made the most of their resources and worked hard to share their knowledge with who needed it.

"Agriculture is seen as the recovery vehicle of our economy," he said. "But our industry faces major challenges.

There will be greater demand for us to do more with the resources we have across the entire supply chain, which includes research scientists transferring technology to farmers.

If we are to meet the growing demand for food, global agricultural research and its dissemination into agriculture is critical.

Our research must be exploited to the maximum. Motivating producers with science will be critical to scientists' capacity to meet this challenge."



**The Irish Grassland
Association**

Special grass measuring pull out

“How to Get Started”

Step by step guide on how to get started

Step 1

What else do I need?

- Quadrate, shears, spring balance and plastic bag
- Motivation and discipline
- Note pad and pen (list of all the paddock numbers, enter cover next to it)
- Size of your paddocks
- Calculator

Step 2

Assign a specific time once a week to walk your farm and allow time afterwards to calculate farm cover and to make decisions based on the information collected during the walk. **There is no point collecting data if you do not use it to make decisions.**

Step 3

Walk the farm. To start off measure the first paddock with your equipment. This will help to train your eye to estimate cover in a paddock. Pick an area that you feel is representative of the paddock. Cut the grass inside the quadrat with your clippers to grazing height, as shown below.



Then place all of the cut grass in a plastic bag and weigh, as shown below (adjust your spring balance to include weight of plastic bag).



It is necessary to estimate the dry matter (DM) of the grass you have in the bag. The table below may help you with this:

DM %	12%	14%	16%	18%	20%
Description	Grass very wet/raining	Grass wet recent rain	Grass dry to touch	Grass dry to touch main grazing season	Grass very dry weather

At this stage you should have the weight of grass in the bag and an estimate of dry matter.

To work out grass cover per ha use this formula:

$$\text{kg DM/ha} = \text{Grass weight (g)} \times 40 \times \text{grass DM\% divided by 100}$$

For example:

Grass weight 200 g and 18% DM

$$200 \times 40 \times 0.18 = 1440 \text{ kg DM/ha}$$

Note paddock number and cover, and continue to the next paddock. Do not waste much time debating the cover - make a decision and move on. After a while it will not be necessary to cut and weigh each paddock, but until you train your eye to estimate covers you should do so. In time you will find cutting a few paddocks, especially the first few, will calibrate your eye for the rest of the farm walk.

Step 4

At the end of the walk it is important to use the information that you have collected to make decisions. To do this you will need to calculate:

- Feed demand per ha
- Average farm cover (= total farm cover/hectares being grazed)
- Growth rate (kg DM/ha/day)
- Grass cover per livestock unit (Average farm cover/total livestock units on grazing area). Teagasc can provide targets for the different times of year.
- Days grazing ahead
- Target pre grazing cover (kg DM/ha)
- Target post grazing cover (kg DM/ha)
- The feed wedge

(If you use a computer programme, such as Teagasc, Agrinet or Kingswood, many of these will be automatically calculated)

The Feed Wedge

The feed wedge is a useful tool to visualize your farm cover, particularly during the main grazing season (April – August). It can be used to identify surpluses and deficits and allow corrective action to be taken. To create a wedge, order your paddocks from highest to lowest cover and shade these in on graph/boxed paper (Fig. 1). Then calculate your feed demand, rotation length and target post-grazing cover to identify your optimum pre-grazing cover.

Example: on a farm stocked at 3 LU/ha, with feed demand of 18 kg/LU/day, rotation length of 21 days and target post grazing cover of 100 kg DM/ha the ideal pre-grazing cover is 1234 kg DM/ha.

$$3 \times 18 \times 21 + 100 = 1234 \text{ kg DM/ha}$$

Draw a line along the wedge from the target pre-grazing cover (e.g. 1234 kg DM/ha as above) to your target post-grazing cover (100 kg DM/ha as above), this is the demand line on your feed wedge (Fig. 1). If you have a perfect feed wedge all the paddocks will touch this line, otherwise management decisions to deal with surpluses/deficits will be required, e.g. remove surplus grass as baled silage or introduce concentrates and/or silage in times of deficit.

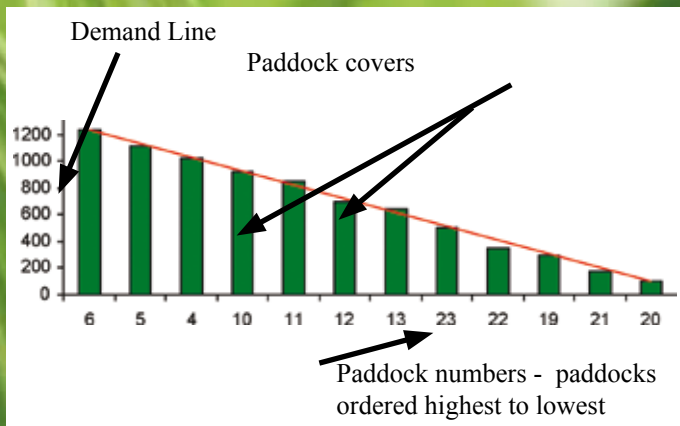


Fig. 1 Example of a feed wedge with pre-grazing cover of 1234 kg DM/ha and post-grazing cover of 100 kg DM/ha.

The spring rotation planner and autumn budgeting should be used to ensure good grass utilization and make sure grass is available until magic day in spring and until housing date in autumn.

Other tips for grass measuring

- Keep a grazing diary of paddocks; this can help identify poorly performing paddocks that you might want to add to your reseeding list
- Do a feed budget every year and revise when necessary
- Use tools like the spring rotation planner for planning your spring feeding
- Keep measuring so you can make timely effective decisions. Ask your local adviser for targets and help when necessary.
- Join a local grass measurement group to learn from others

For more information/assistance contact the IGA Regional Development Officers or your local advisor.

“Happy Measuring”



Irish 
Grassland
Association

WE WANT YOU

Following the previous successful recruitment of part-time Regional Development Officers the Irish Grassland Association are keen to recruit persons to cover the South West and West of the country.

Applicants should be farming, part-time farming or from a strong farming background.

An established relationship with the Irish Grassland Association would be a distinct benefit.

If you are interested in applying for this position a full job description and application form is on our website

www.irishgrassland.com

or call our Office Manager Maura Callery on 087 9626483.

Closing date for applications is Friday 17th May 2012



ADVERTISEMENT

**The FP7 funded European
project MultiSward
WANTS YOUR HELP!**

The project involves partners from 11 European countries, including Ireland. The overall objective of the project is to improve and increase grassland use across Europe. MultiSward wants to actively involve all stakeholders in this project and to this end the project partners have devised a questionnaire and would appreciate if you could take the time to complete it.

The questionnaire is available at
www.multisward.eu/multisward_eng/Questionnaire-for-stakeholder

**For further information contact
deirdre.hennessy@teagasc.ie**



ADVERTISEMENT



A very important event for Irish Beef and Sheep Breeding

- Event:** In conjunction with ICAR 2012 (www.icar2012.ie) ICBF are hosting a day dedicated to the topic of **“Information for profitable beef and sheep farming.”**
- Date:** Tuesday 29th May 2012
- Venue:** Rochestown Park Hotel, Cork.
- Time:** 10:30am-6:00pm
- Speakers:** Top National and International speakers who will be attending for the ICAR conference.

Target

- Audience:**
- Irish Beef and Sheep farmers & breeders, and
 - Policy and decision makers in the worldwide beef and sheep recording and breeding industry.

Invitation: Invitations will be sent to ICBF Herdplus and Lambplus members in mid May.

- Booking a place:**
- Response & booking by SMS, or
 - Email mmadden@icbf.com or phone 023 882 0222.



CHANGES IN SWARD COMPOSITION OBSERVED IN THE TWO YEARS AFTER SOWING

Deirdre Hennessy (Vice President of Irish Grassland Association and Teagasc Researcher, Moorepark)



Perennial ryegrass cultivars are evaluated as monocultures but sown as mixtures on farms. Sward composition can change over time from that which was sown, but the change is usually not visible as perennial ryegrass cultivars all appear very similar. Vincent Griffith and colleagues at Moorepark used a starch gel electrophoresis method to determine if changes occurred in two way mixtures in the two years after sowing. Three cultivars (two diploid and one tetraploid) were sown in two mixtures with different proportions of seed in each. Samples were analysed six times during each year. The researchers found greater stability in the diploid mixtures compared to the diploid tetraploid mixtures. The tetraploid

was more aggressive than the two diploids and increased its contribution to the sward over and above the proportion sown when its contribution to the seed mix was less than 50%.

Griffith, V., Gilliland, T.J., O'Donovan, M., and McEvoy, M. (2012) Sward composition dynamics in perennial ryegrass binary mixtures. In: Proceedings of the Agricultural Research Forum, 12 & 13 March 2012, Tullamore. P 85.



WHAT SYSTEM BEST SUITS JERSEY HOLSTEIN FRIESIAN DAIRY COWS?

The Jersey breed is particularly popular for crossbreeding programmes due to its ability to improve milk composition. Elaine Vance and colleagues at AFBI, Hillsborough, Co. Down compared the performance of Holstein Friesian (HF) and Jersey × Holstein Friesian (J×HF) spring calving dairy cows in two feed systems, the first was a total confined system, and the second was a low input grazing system with cows turned out to grass in early March. On average HF cows were heavier than J×HF. The J×HF cows produced milk with higher fat and protein content than the HF cows. The J×HF cows were capable of competing with the HF cows in terms of milk production in the low input grazing system, but not in the confined system. The J×HF cows produced 1615 kg milk/cow less than the HF cows in the confined system.

Vance, E.R., Elliott, C.T., Kilpatrick, D.J. and Ferris, C.P. (2011) *The performance of Holstein Friesian and Jersey × Holstein Friesian dairy cows within a low concentrate input grazing system and a high concentrate total confinement system. In: Proceedings of the British Grassland Society 10th Research Conference, 20-21 September 2011. pp 29-30.*

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP EXPANDS

Dr. Tim Keady (Irish Grassland Association council member and chairman of the corporate committee)



The Irish Grassland Association is grateful for the support of its 88 corporate members which has enabled the Association to expand the number and range of national and local events that it runs annually at an affordable cost to its members.

The Irish Grassland Association is a non-profit making organisation which was formed in 1946 and is Ireland's leading forum for discussion of the science of, and transfer of technology on, forage and animal production and the economics of dairy, beef and sheep systems. Currently membership consists of almost 900 of the most progressive dairy, beef and sheep producers, agricultural scientists, consultants and agri-business personnel.

Corporate members, through their membership fees, enable the Irish Grassland Association to continually provide, and encourage adaption of, independent highly relevant technical information to the Irish dairy, beef and sheep sectors at a reasonable cost thus subsequently enabling producers to increase farm profitability. As the number of corporate members has increased dramatically, it has enabled the Association to increase the number of events held annually. Corporate members benefit from the ease of access to independent relevant technical data together with increased opportunities to network with Ireland's leading forward thinking producers, scientists and agri-business personnel. Furthermore corporate members are given increased exposure to Ireland's leading agri-industry personnel.

Increase in corporate membership

Traditionally during the 1990's and 2000's corporate membership ranged from 20 to 30 members annually. In 2009 a recruitment drive was undertaken to increase corporate membership. Corporate membership increased dramatically in the ensuing three years. Corporate membership increased from 28 in 2009 to 88 in 2012. The increase in corporate members has enabled the Association to expand membership and the number and quality of events held nationally, whilst reducing costs to its members. Furthermore the increase in corporate members has enabled the recruitment of Regional Development Officers who organise additional events for members in thie regions.

Corporate members represent a broad range of sectors within the industry including animal remedies, banking, co-ops, cattle breeding, crop packaging, fast food, feed ingredient manufacturers, feed compounders, grass seed breeders and distributors, insurance, laboratories, machinery manufactures and distributors, meat processors, milking equipment, press, service providers, etc.

The Irish Grassland Association continues to recruit corporate members which enable the Association to provide, and encourage the adaption of, independent highly relevant technical information to the Irish livestock sectors subsequent resulting in a vibrant sustainable agricultural industry.



GERMINAL SEEDS AND GOLDCROP RENEW SPONSORSHIP OF IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION RESEEDING EVENTS FOR 2012

UPCOMING EVENTS

Following on from the five very successful reseeding events organised by the Irish Grassland Association and sponsored by Germinal Seeds and Goldcrop in 2011, we are pleased to announce that we will be organising a further two events during the summer of 2012. We are delighted that once again Goldcrop and Germinal Seeds will be sponsoring these events.

Reseeding is a key component to increasing meat and milk production from grazed grass. Reseeded swards generally produce greater quantities of herbage, particularly in the early spring and late autumn/winter, than do old permanent pastures. This increased grass supply allows livestock to be turned out to grass earlier than is possible in old permanent pasture. Reseeded pastures also generally have higher feed quality than old swards.

Similar to 2011 Teagasc Advisors and Grassland Researchers will be in attendance to provide information on all aspects of reseeding, there will be a demonstration of reseeding and the sponsors will also be present.

Dates and locations of the events will be posted on the Irish Grassland Association website www.irishgrassland.com once they have been confirmed and they will also be advertised in local press.



Pat Weeks
Irish Grassland Association
council member and
Dairy Farmer

Dairy Summer Tour 2012

The Irish Grassland Association Dairy Summer Tour will be held in West Cork on the 26th of July 2012. We will be visiting the O'Donovan Family based in Skibbereen and the Shannon Family based in Ballinascarthy. The theme of this year's tour is "Growing the Farm Business"

O'Donovan's, Skibbereen

The first farm visit is to the O'Donovan family based in Skibbereen. This is a committed dairy farming family with father Derry and mother Anna running the home farm and two sons Norman and Damien milking cows on two other milking platforms. On the day all three will give their views on what makes this farming business tick.

The O'Donovan's story starts back in 1978 when Derry's father had the foresight to hand over the reins to Derry when he was 26 years old.

The farm consisted of 135 acres and 120 cows supplying around 136,000 gals. In 1979 Derry purchased 76 acres so expansion was always on his mind. In 1984 he sold the 76 acres and bought land at Ilen House, Skibbereen. This is now Norman's farm and has been a milking platform for 20 years for the O'Donovan's. Over the years there have been many parcels bought and leased to advance the business. Derry's two sons Norman and Damien have come into the business since 2000. In 2008, 160 acres were bought with 84,000 gallons of quota, this is the milking platform run by Damien. In 2009 a 200 acre farm was leased 27 miles away and is used to rear young stock. So there are now four main blocks consisting of

- **Home farm in Raheen Skibbereen – 210 acres milking 172 cows**
- **Ilen house - 300 acre milking 243 cows with its own outside block of 110 acres.**
- **Drinagh - 180 acres milking 165 cows**
- **Castletown-kinneigh - 200 acres leased for young stock**

Cow type is another interesting debate to be had on this West Cork farm. In the late 80's, early

UPCOMING EVENTS

90's this farm had Holstein pedigree cows, were calving winter and spring, and on a high input, high output type system with cows milking up to 1550 gallons at 4.00% butterfat and 3.29% protein. About 15 years ago the O'Donovan's started to use some New Zealand genetics and have been crossbreeding to Jersey for up to 10 years now. Derry and the lads have quite strong views on why they changed and why the new system, which has a much lower yielding cow and much lower input costs, suits them. On the day they will also go through their criteria for bull selection (they are moving to a crossbred bull which is more Friesian than Jersey).

The O'Donovan's will also be outlining other key points that drive this large dairy business. Filling out the profit monitor, which they have been doing for a long time, the importance of being in a discussion group, and grass budgeting, especially in the autumn and the spring when grass is scarce.

Other points of interest on the day will be how the O'Donovan's intend to handle quota and cow numbers for the next three years, and where this family sees their farming business going in the next 15 to 20 years.

Robert and Shirley Shannon Ballinascorthy

The second visit will be to the farm of Robert and Shirley Shannon based in Ballinascorthy. Robert, originally from Ballydehob, moved to Shirley's home farm in November 1993 when they married.

Initially the Shannon's were running a mixed enterprise, Pedigree Aberdeen Angus sucklers in Ballydehob, and dairy, beef and tillage in Ballinascorthy. The dairy enterprise is now based around the Carbery winter milk scheme.

Up to 5 years ago the farm had a quota of around 50,000 gallons supplying Lisavaird Co-op from 35 cows. Since then the Shannon's have significantly expanded the dairy enterprise now supplying 130,000 gallons from 80 cows on a grazing platform of 65 acres. The increased quota being supplied has been purchased on five occasions through the quota exchange. The significant herd expansion has been achieved from replacements produced within their own herd so as not to compromise on herd health. To make way for the increase in cow numbers, replacement stock are now being contract reared four miles away from the home farm.

The milking herd consists mainly of pedigree Holstein Friesian with a small number of pedigree Jersey and a few crossbreds. Last year's profit monitor has average cow yield of 7314 litres at 4.03% butterfat and 3.69% protein giving 582 kg MS/cow. This very high output farm (>2000 gals/acre) has excellent profit margins and we will go through how this is being achieved on the day.

Robert, a respected Holstein Friesian breeder, bred BYJ Ballydehob Justice, one of the highest EBI and heavily used Oman sons over the last few years. On the day he will outline his views on what is his ideal cow and why he is happy to stick with pure breeds in contrast to the O'Donovan's who are committed to cross breeding.

While there is a contrast in per cow production and cow type on both farms, each farm has excellent grassland management, with very good attention to detail on all aspects of the business. Each farm has significantly expanded output and is well set-up for the post 2015 challenges.

Farmers on the day will hear at first-hand how two seriously committed dairy farming families have achieved massive expansion in different ways, the steps that were put in place to achieve the expansion, the issues that had to be addressed to achieve scale and the critical messages both families have for farmers who want to expand.

You will be able to make bookings online very shortly: www.irishgrassland.com



Exciting visit to midlands sheep farmer

This year's Irish Grassland Association Sheep Conference and Farm Walk heads west from previous year's events. The farm walk will be held on Tuesday 22 May 2012 on the farm of Gordon and Yvonne Johnston. Gordon and Yvonne are farming just outside Tyrellspass in Co. Westmeath and are active members of the IGA. They are also involved in Sheep Ireland Breed Improvement Programmes and are members of the Offaly Lamb Producer Group.

Mullinahone Co-op and Sheep Ireland have been great supporters of previous IGA Sheep Conference's and Farm Walk's and have kindly agreed to sponsor this year's event. We are delighted to have both companies involved and look forward to working with them. Speaking at the launch of the event, Liam Egan, Mullinahone Co-op said the company was delighted to come on board with the IGA for this year's event. Eamon Wall, Sheep Ireland, commented that Gordon and Yvonne have been great supporters of sheep breed improvement programmes and stated that the farm will be a great setting for flock owners to witness and gain practical lessons in running a successful sheep enterprise.

Farming activities on the farm have changed markedly over the last decade. The construction of the new M6 motorway split the main block of farm land in two. Prior to this farming enterprises included a 50 cow suckler herd and a flock of 200 ewes. The new roadway greatly disrupted farm infrastructure and made running of the suckler herd increasingly difficult. A decision was taken to exit suckling and concentrate on sheep.

Sheep numbers increased to approximately 500 head. This can be broken down into a commercial flock of 450 ewes and a flock of 50 pedigree Vendeen ewes. Breeding in the commercial flock has also developed during this timeframe into Lley cross Texel ewes. Performance of the flock is very impressive with mature ewes this year scanning about 2.1 lambs per ewe and turned out to grass with approximately 1.9 lambs per ewe.

Grassland management and feeding ewes correctly is high on the agenda. Last year the weaning rate was over 1.5 lambs per ewe, including ewe lambs. Strong performance on the farm can be attributed to attention to detail and doing the simple things right. Ewes are lambed in three groups to spread workload and make best possible use of available housing. Two groups of 160 ewes are lambed 25th February and 13th March followed by a group of ewe lambs and two year old hoggets at the beginning of April. Pedigree ewes are lambed in December Ewe lambs are bred to increase output and also reduce the costs of retaining these animals idle over the winter. Breeding ewe lambs allows a closed flock to be maintained. Hogget ewes that rear twin lambs as yearlings are also held back to lamb with this flock. This gives these animals more time to recover and is proving beneficial in increasing the lambing percentage.

GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT

The stocking rate on the farm is just shy of 10 ewes per hectare which is well above the average sheep flock. Land type can be described as good, although the clay soil nature of the soil means land can become wet with heavy or prolonged rainfall. The aim with grassland management is to maintain high quality grass at all times by keeping supply slightly ahead of demand. The Johnston's are one of a small number of sheep farmers measuring grass. Fertiliser usage is also targeted to maintain grass supply and quality. Lamb performance at grass is good with all lambs from adult ewes finished off grass. Hoggets lambs and stragglers are fed meal from late September.

The farm is unique in that it differs from conventional systems with no silage saved. Instead, Gordon and Yvonne save up grass going into the winter for use in the 'Knockbeg' system to feed ewes for November and December and into January. This is working excellently and has cut the workload associated with housing ewes earlier. Ewes are then housed on concentrates and straw. There are a number of benefits to this system. Workload is reduced, feed quality is more predictable than silage and ewe performance can be closely monitored. There will be many other points of interest displayed on the day. Faecal egg counting is used to determine if dosing is required and a footbath programme is proving successful in reducing foot problems to a minimum.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Conference proceedings will include progress from lowland BETTER sheep farms. The programme has been in operation for three years and has proved extremely successful in increasing the stocking rate, the number of lambs reared per ewe put to the ram and ultimately profitability of these sheep enterprises. The lessons learned on these farms are invaluable and can be adopted by all farmers to streamline their farm enterprise. No matter what business you are in, it is important to have a plan to work towards. Farming is no different. Putting a plan in place to work towards will keep you focused on where you want your farm to be in one, two, three or even five years time. It will also allow you to benchmark or track your performance to date. This section will include the experiences of building a flock from zero to over 1,000 head.

The importance of high digestibility feed value silage cannot be underestimated in sheep enterprises. This paper will look into the practicalities of ensiling high digestibility feed value silage from fertiliser usage, cutting dates, ensiling techniques etc.

Flock health planning will also feature on the day. This is very timely given the increase in value of sheep. With issues such as resistance to many of the most commonly used drugs available on the market, new trains of thought are emerging to flock health. Advice on putting preventative rather than fire brigade tactics into operation will pay huge dividends in reducing veterinary cost and increasing animal performance.

TO REGISTER

Tickets will be available for members for €25 for registrations made before May 8th **ONLY** using the attached discounted coupon on page 28. Registration fee includes:

- Attendance at event
- Light refreshments on arrival at hotel
- Set of conference papers
- Bus transfers to and from farm
- Two course dinner with tea/coffee

Full details of the conference centre location, B&B discounts and the programme for the day will be available shortly online www.irishgrassland.com and in the media. Alternatively call our office on (087) 9626483.



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**We would like to thank our
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and Mullinahone Co-op**





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Sheep conference & farm walk

Tuesday 22nd May 2012

Online booking available for this event on

www.irishgrassland.com

Book ____ members(s) at €25 each. Total € ____

Book ____ non member(s) at €50 each. Total € ____

Cheque enclosed: €

Any registrations after 8th May 2012 will incur a
€10 surcharge for members and €20 for non members.

ATTENDING DELEGATE CONTACT DETAILS

NAME (DELEGATE 1): _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

PHONE NO: _____

NAME (DELEGATE 2): _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

PHONE NO: _____