



Irish Grassland Association

Newsletter Issue No. 24 July 2014

“to advance the knowledge of good grassland management in Irish Farming”



CONTENTS

Presidential address	4
AGM notification	5
Topical event review – Growing More Grass	6
Progress on the Implementation of the sustainable use of pesticides directive (SUD)	8
Silage swards most vulnerable	11
Beef Summer Tour preview	12
Sheep Farm Walks preview	14
Dairy Summer Tour preview	16
Grass Mentoring Programme	18
Automatic Milking Systems in Ireland	20
Dates for your Diary	23

CORPORATE MEMBERS 2014



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Contact the Irish Grassland Association office today...**

Cookstown, Kells, Co. Meath, Ireland.

www.irishgrassland.com

General Information: secretary@irishgrassland.com

Tel: (087) 96 26 483 Opening Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9 am - 5 pm

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Irish Grassland Association President's Address

Dear Member,

Welcome to this edition of the Irish Grassland Association Newsletter. We're writing this newsletter after one of the best periods of grass growth across the country over the last couple of years and we hope members were able to take advantage of the good weather.

On page 6 Council member Jan Jensma reviews our topical event "Growing more grass" which was held in Newcatlewest on the 24th of April. The event was held on Danny and Patrick Cremin's farm and was sponsored by Yara Fertiliser. We'd like to thank the host farmers, sponsors and guest speakers Mary McEvoy, Mark Plunkett and Jez Wardman for their presentations on the day.

The article on page 8 is by Sheila Macken Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and covers Progress on the Implementation of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD). This article is followed on page 10 by an article by Chris Maughan on the disastrous consequences of weeds in silage crops and general grassland. Chris outlines the best sprays and rates that need to be used to kill these weeds and timing of best when to do this.

The Dairy Summer Tour will take place in Co. Laois this year on the 12th of August. The theme of the tour is "Strategies for successful expansion". The two farms we will visit have expanded a lot over the last few years and are going to outline how they took on the expansion from their point of view during the visits. The Dairy Summer Tour is again kindly sponsored this year by AIB and we are very grateful for that. We have previewed the event on page 16.

This years Beef Event has changed from the usual format of a conference in morning followed by a farm walk to a Beef Summer Tour. The event will take place on the 29th of July in Co. Waterford on the farms of Thomas and Bridget Murphy and James and Mary Grace. Both farms differ in how they run their systems and will provide a good discussion on the day. The event is BTAP approved and is kindly sponsored by IFAC and ICBF and we'd like to thank them for that. The Beef Summer Tour is previewed on page 12.

The format of the Sheep Event has also changed this year. We are running with two farm walks. The first one is on the 31st of July in Co. Sligo, with the second walk on the 7th of August in Co. Louth. Both events are kindly sponsored by Sheep Ireland and Mullinahone Co-op. These farm walks are free for members to attend and are previewed on page 14.

More information on and registration details for events is available on our website www.irishgrassland.com or by contacting the Office Manager, Maura Callery, secretary@irishgrassland.com

On pages 20-22 we have an article from Dr. Catriona Foley on Automatic Milking Systems in Ireland. The article gives an insight into how the AMS came to Moorepark and why it is being researched. There is also



Eddie O'Donnell,
President of the IGA
and Dairy Farmer

technical information in the article which gives a good insight into the information gathered by the trial so far this year.

The Irish Grassland Association 'Grass Mentoring Programme' is being launched this month and will begin this autumn. The programme will give the opportunity for farmers to improve their grassland management skills by accompanying a 'mentor farmer' on his/her weekly grass walk and seeing first-hand how they manage grass. Dairy, beef and sheep farmers are all welcome to apply. On page Paidi Kelly outlines the programme and how you can get involved. The reasons behind this new initiative go back to our mission statement "to advance the knowledge of good grassland management in Irish farming".

As always we have a few dates for your diary on page 23 outlining what is coming up in the next few months on the Irish Grassland Association calendar. These include the Beef Summer Tour, Dairy Summer Tour and two Sheep Farm Walks.

More details will be available on this and on coming events on the website www.irishgrassland.com and our facebook page www.facebook.com/irishgrassland, or follow us on twitter @IrishGrassland or by contacting the Office manager, Maura Callery, secretary@irishgrassland.com

Yours sincerely,

Eddie O'Donnell

Eddie O'Donnell
President of the Irish Grassland Association 2013/14

AGM Notification

Date set for the 2014 AGM

The 2014 AGM of the Irish Grassland Association will take place on Thursday 18th September in the Horse and Jockey Hotel Tipperary at 10.00am. All members are entitled to attend, and it is a good opportunity to see how the Association operates and it is also an opportunity for members to become involved in the Council. Each year a number of seats on Council are available to be filled through election. All members of the Irish Grassland Association are eligible to put their names forward for election. If you wish to put your name forward, then your name along with the name of a member who is nominating you and the name of a member seconding that nomination must be received by the Office Manager two weeks before the AGM, this year that date is the 4th of September. As well as the election, a round up of the year's activities will be presented, as will the 2013 accounts.

It has being a successful year again for the Irish Grassland Association and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in running our events. Please email Maura (secretary@irishgrassland.com) by 4th September to register if you wish to attend the AGM.

I look forward to meeting you at some of the upcoming summer events.

Eddie O'Donnell



Topical Event Review Growing More Grass

Jan Jensma, Irish Grassland Association Council Member and Yara



On the 24th of April the Irish Grassland Association, in conjunction with Yara Fertiliser, held a very successful event at the farm of Danny and Patrick Cremin in Newcastlewest, Co Limerick. The title of the event was "Growing More Grass" for all grass based farmers to get the best knowledge about growing the most grass possible on their farms. Approximately 110 people attended this event.

Attendees were welcomed to the event by Karen Dukelow, Irish Grassland Association Council Member, where they signed in and were given a leaflet. This leaflet was a point of reference to calculate offtake of P & K taken at different stocking rates and for 1st and 2nd cut silage. There was also a list of typical nutrient values for cattle slurry, soiled water, FYM, pig slurry etc.

At the start of the tour Eddie O Donnell, President of the Irish Grassland Association, welcomed attendees. Danny and Patrick Cremin gave a brief history of the farm and how they started together as a partnership. Danny and Patrick were initially farming individually but joined forces as they believed they could be more efficient working together. In 2008 they went into partnership and in 2009 built a new yard on a greenfield site where they were milking 120 cows on 66 ha. They are now up to 200 cows utilising the same 66 hectares.

After forming the partnership they undertook a major reseeding programme, and to date 92% of the farm has been reseeded. Every year each paddock is analysed for total grass production and in 2011 the total production on the farm averaged 12.3 t DM/ha. The aim would be to bring this closer to 15 - 16 t DM/ha by using different grass varieties and increasing soil fertility.

Grass is measured weekly and information fed into Teagasc's PastureBaselreland system. The reseeding policy that is in place is that if a paddock is not producing 10 – 11 t DM/ha in a year it will be taken out for reseeding. As majority of the farm has been reseeded recently, it is only expected that 10-15% of the farm will be reseeded each year. The potential of the farm is still being realised so when the maximum output of the farm is reached that will then determine the maximum herd size.

One of the fields visited on the day grew 13.7 t DM/ha in 2013 with P and K indexes of 2 and a pH of 6.2. The indexes need to be brought up to 3 to get the grass growth up to the target of 16 t DM/ha.

The Cremins 200 cow herd are mainly first cross jersey. At the time of the visit, they were producing 28.5

litres a day at 3.51% protein and 4.14% fat or 2.18 kg milk solids (MS) per day. Cows were being fed 2 kg per day in the parlour. In 2013 the cows produced 400 kg MS per head and 1,230 kg MS/ha on the milking platform which is stocked at 3 LU/ha. Danny and Patrick want a tight calving period and this spring 85% of the cows were calved in 6 weeks.

After the farm walk there were three presentations which were given by Mary McEvoy, Teagasc, Mark Plunkett, Teagasc and Jez Wardman, Yara.

Mary McEvoy said in her presentation that grass utilisation is vital in growing more grass and a target should be to increase the number of grazing days. A flexible approach to grazing should be taken as poaching can reduce grass growth rates by 15% and up to 50%, depending on soil type and level of damage. A pre-grazing cover of no more than 1,300 - 1,400 kg DM/ha is critical to ensure that no dead material builds up at the base of the sward.

Mark Plunkett developed a point that Mary also made in her presentation, the most important thing to focus on before reseeding is soil fertility and soil pH. Mark showed that in 2013 90% of the grassland in Ireland was either too low in pH, P or K. Building up P levels will take a number of years with lighter soils moving faster. Soil tests should be done more frequently when building up indexes so that progress can be monitored and changes made if necessary. K levels will increase faster than P Levels.

The final presentation was given by Jez Wardman from Yara. Jez spoke about the importance of fertiliser choice and the importance of crop nutrients. The key message was that balanced nutrition helps improve grassland productivity. Jez recommended that farmers should get their slurry analysed as values given for slurry are only average values and to get an accurate picture of the contribution that soils and manures are making to a crop taking a soil and manure analysis gives a full picture.

All attendees would have thought that the time spent on The Cremin Brothers farm was time well spent.

There were pointers to take home about Growing More Grass from the walk on the farm and from the presentations afterwards that everyone should have had plenty to write into their free Yara notepads for the rest of the day!



Thank you to YARA for sponsoring the event



Mary McEvoy, Teagasc, presenting to attendees at the IGA YARA sponsored event 'Growing More Grass'



Progress on the Implementation of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD)

Sheila Macken, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

The SUD establishes a framework for community action to achieve the sustainable use of pesticides. It aims to fill the current legislative gap regarding the use-phase of pesticides at EU level through setting minimum rules for the use of pesticides in the Community so as to reduce risks to human health and the environment. It also promotes the use of integrated pest management. Implementation of the SUD relies heavily on the training of the various people involved at all levels of the industry, including pesticide advisors, professional users, pesticide distributors and inspectors of pesticide application equipment. A new programme to test all pesticide application equipment will also be put in place.

Pesticide Advisors (PAs)

A PA is any person who has acquired adequate knowledge and advises on pest management and the safe use of pesticides, in the context of a professional capacity or commercial service, including private self-employed and public advisory services, commercial agents, food producers and retailers where applicable.

Registration

All PAs must be registered with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). They may do so register using the online registration facility available on the PCS website (www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/SUD.htm). In registering, the PA commits to participating in continuous professional education (CPE) in order to maintain his/her registration.

Training

Any person wishing to register as a PA must hold the Prof Diploma in IPM and Sustainable Use of Pesticides, awarded by UCD. Equivalent qualifications may also be recognised as meeting requirements to register as a PA. The DAFM will determine if alternative qualifications meet requirements on a case by case basis. Irish Agricultural Supply Industry Standards (IASIS) have developed CPE rules for PAs and compliance with these satisfies the additional training requirements referred to in the legislation (www.iasis.ie/advisors.php). Equivalent CPE records may also be recognised as meeting CPE requirements. The DAFM will determine if alternative CPE records meet requirements on a case by case basis.

Professional Users (PUs)

A professional user is any person who uses pesticides in the course of their professional activities, including operators, technicians, employers and self-employed people, both in the farming and other sectors.

Registration

All professional users must be registered by 26th November 2015. From this date, only a registered professional user can apply pesticides authorised for professional use. Existing clients of the DAFM (e.g. farmers) who are registered to use the DAFM agfood.ie online facilities should apply to register as a Professional User by logging onto www.agfood.ie and selecting the Sustainable Use Directive System from the menu of options that are available. The application can then be made by completing a short form. In order to streamline and simplify future interactions with DAFM, it is recommended that other existing DAFM clients who are not currently registered to use the DAFM online facilities should do so at www.agfood.ie, as follows:

- Click on agfood.ie on the DAFM homepage
- Click on 'Register' for Online Services
- Fill out details and 'Submit Registration'

The applicant will be sent their 'PAC' by return of post. They can then log on immediately to www.agfood.ie and register as a Professional User by selecting the Sustainable Use Directive System from the menu of options that are available. The application can then be made by completing a short form and the user will also be able to avail of all other relevant DAFM online facilities. Other individuals who are not existing clients of the DAFM or who do not wish to use the DAFM agfood.ie online facilities should register using the online registration facility available for Professional Users on the PCS website (www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/SUD.htm). A DAFM-registered Pesticide Advisor may register as a Professional User without any further training.

Note: You may be asked for proof of qualification at registration or subsequently at on-farm inspection.

Training

People who have completed the Pesticide Application module as part of a Teagasc (FETAC level 5 or 6) course will meet the requirements for professional user training. Similarly, anyone who has completed the Teagasc standalone Pesticide Application short course (Level 5) or the City and Guilds Pesticide Application courses – PA series, will also be deemed appropriately trained. PA1 is the foundation module and different modules specific to particular equipment can be chosen to suit the individual user, e.g. PA2 for tractor-mounted sprayers, PA6 for hand-held applicators. Equivalent qualifications may also be recognised as meeting requirements to register as a professional user. The DAFM will determine if alternative qualifications meet requirements on a case by case basis.

Inspectors of Pesticide Application Equipment

A pesticide application equipment inspector is any person who has acquired adequate knowledge and verifies that pesticide application equipment satisfies the relevant requirements listed in Annex II of Directive 2009/128/EC, in order to achieve a high level of protection for human health and the environment.

Registration

Inspectors of Pesticide Application Equipment should register using the online registration facility available for Inspectors of Pesticide Application Equipment on the PCS website (www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/SUD.htm). In registering, the Inspector commits to participating in CPE in order to maintain his/her registration.

Training

A new course has been developed by DAFM in conjunction with Teagasc. Inspectors will be required to complete it in order to remain/be included on the register. Equivalent qualifications may also be recognised as meeting requirements to register as an Inspector. The DAFM will determine if alternative qualifications meet requirements on a case by case basis. Minimum CPE requirements for an Inspector will be developed in 2015.

Pesticide Application Equipment

All boom sprayers greater than 3 m and all blast and orchard sprayers must be tested at least once by 26th November 2016. The interval between inspections must not exceed 5 years until 2020 and must not exceed 3 years thereafter.

Integrated Pest Management

All professional users shall apply the general principles of IPM and maintain records to demonstrate the application of these principles. The general principles of IPM are listed in the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive which is available on the PCS website (www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie). They include the following practices:

- prevention and/or suppression of harmful organisms,
- monitoring of harmful organisms,
- application of appropriate plant protection measures,
- use of sustainable biological, physical or other non-chemical methods,
- use of pesticides that are as specific as possible for the target pest,
- use of pesticides to the necessary levels,
- use of anti-resistance strategies to maintain the effectiveness of products,
- recording of the success of the applied crop protection measure.

Record-keeping

Compliance with IPM requirements will be recorded in the user's Plant Protection Product Use Record sheet is available on the PCS website (www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie). A worksheet has also been developed that will record on a whole enterprise level (farm or non-agricultural business e.g. amenity, forestry) how the general principles of IPM are being applied. **All** individuals who apply plant protection products are required to maintain these records. There are no exemptions from the requirement to maintain these records.

Protecting Water from Pesticides

Careless storage, handling or use of pesticides, or improper disposal of empty pesticide containers, can easily cause breaches of the legal limit for pesticides in drinking water. Water bodies are particularly vulnerable to runoff or washoff inputs from hard or compacted surfaces.

It is essential to take particular care and follow best practice procedures when using any pesticide near water bodies. Some key points to bear in mind are:

- ONLY use pesticides if necessary and as part of an integrated pest management strategy. Consider non-chemical methods instead of or in tandem with pesticides.
- ALWAYS read and follow the product label.
- RESPECT statutory no-use zones (safeguard zones) around drinking water abstraction points.
- Ensure that pesticide products are stored in a secure, dry area which cannot result in accidental releases to drains, wells or water courses.
- Ensure that pesticide application equipment used is properly calibrated and in good working order.
- Ensure that empty, triple-rinsed containers and foil caps are disposed of in accordance with the Good Practice Guide for Empty Pesticide Containers <http://www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/Default.htm>

Advice leaflets on protecting drinking water from pesticides, prepared by DAFM, Teagasc and the Environmental Protection Agency are available on the PCS website <http://www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/SUD.htm>

Silage swards most vulnerable

Chris Maughan, Whelehan Crop Protection



June can be an ideal time to kill docks and thistles in second cut silage crops, says weed control specialist Chris Maughan of Whelehan Crop Protection.

The open nature of silage swards after cutting favours the establishment of docks and weeds and this is further compounded by the application of slurry to bare stubble which leads to a temporary setback to the grass and is an ideal seedbed for dock seedlings. Research by Teagasc and internationally has found that high soil potash levels gave a competitive advantage to docks over grass. Cattle slurry is rich in potash and, when combined with chemical potash application, can lead to high potash in the soil.

Docks and thistles have a devastating impact on grass and silage yields

Trials at the Aberystwyth Research Centre in Wales have shown that a 20% infestation of docks cuts silage yields by 20%. This equates to the loss of almost 1 t silage DM/ac in a typical crop of first cut silage. Separate research has shown that docks adversely affect fermentation of silage, leading to a reduction in feed value and dock stems play havoc with the film on silage bales. One mature dock plant can produce up to 60,000 seeds a year and seeds can remain viable in soil for up to 70 years. The dock taproot can be up to 1 m deep.

Seeds from creeping thistles can remain viable in soil for up to 21 years. The roots of one creeping thistle can grow to cover 5 m² in one year and up to 80 sq metres m² in two years. In addition to spreading orf, a serious hazard in sheep, thistles also carry the risk of spreading other diseases such as pink eye and mastitis.

Bale damage

Docks are a serious cause of losses in big bale silage. The stems of mature docks puncture the film leading to significant wastage. Teagasc research has shown that almost half of all silage bales had visible film damage. Dock stems are a significant contributor to bale damage, the big contributor to wastage which surveys have shown is at least 10% on the majority of farms. With some 20 million bales made every year, this amounts to a loss of around €40m.

Chemical Control of Docks and Thistles

Spraying with a Fluroxypyr and Triclopyr product such as DoxstarPro when weeds emerge after 1st cut silage has proven to provide excellent control over the years. But it is important that docks are at the correct growth stage. They should be 6 - 8 inches high or across and before a seed head begins to show. This would normally happen around three to four weeks following silage cutting. If you are planning to take a 2nd cut of silage remember to leave it at least 3 weeks before you cut as this enables the chemical to get right down to the large taproot and is proven to give very effective longer term control. If grazing afterwards, keep livestock off for seven days. If docks are gone too strong, top them and wait for about three weeks to spray. DoxstarPro has no effect on grass or silage yields.

The DoxstarPro Programme

- Apply DoxstarPro at 2.0 litres/ha as a single application or use the split rate of 1.0 litre/ha
- A follow up application within 12 months can lead to greater longer term control
- Use a minimum of 300 litres water per ha (30gal/ac)

For thistles and other key grassland weeds, products such as Thistlex or Pastor are recommended. They are very safe to grass and will have a long lasting effect on the weeds controlled.



Beef Summer Tour Preview

Making Suckling Work for You! The Right Cow on the Right Grass

Karen Dukelow, Irish Grassland Association, Council Member and Teagasc



The Irish Grassland Association Beef Summer Tour 2014 is titled "Making Suckling Work for You – The right cow on the right grass" and will take place on Tuesday 29th of July. The event has kindly been sponsored by IFAC and Herdplus. We will visit two profitable beef farms, Tom and Bridget Murphy, Ballycahane, Portlaw, Co. Waterford and James and Mary Grace, Ballincur Mooncoin, Co. Kilkenny. Both farms from strong hurling counties and both farms delivering a healthy profit from suckling! The tour will provide a great opportunity to discover the factors underpinning their profitability.



Tom and Bridget farm 92 ha in three blocks. The tour will visit the block in Mountbolton. They run a 150 cow-suckler herd with all offspring finished to beef. The herd is 50% autumn and 50% spring calving. The heifers are finished at 18-20 months (380kg) and the bulls are finished at 16-18 months (420kg).

Tom has been a member of the Drumlohan Grass Group. This has brought a wealth of experience to Tom's farming system, so much so that he often throws a hand in on grassland management on his brother's dairy farm! His experience is that grassland management on the cattle side is more challenging as more grazing groups means that grass surpluses can be more difficult to spot. He walks his farm weekly to ensure that surpluses are taken out as bales. Tom is always tweaking his grassland management and has recently improved flexibility of his grazing management by fitting extra water troughs in his paddocks. He also plans to put in additional permanent fencing. It will be very interesting to hear on the day how he has strived to maximise liveweight gain from grass.

Tom is always looking for ways to improve his farm profitability and has completed the profit monitor for a number of years. One area that was picked up on was the need to improve the quality and liveweight gain of his stock. He has improved the quality of his stock bulls to do this. However, he would like to improve the milk yield of his cows. To do this, he has purchased Limousin first cross cows from the dairy herd. Is this the best method to target milk improvement in cows? Experts from ICBF will be on hand on the day to go through different replacement heifer strategies and how the new Replacement Index can be used to produce replacements.

James & Mary farm a short distance away in Mooncoin. They run a 55 cow autumn calving herd. The herd consists of first cross Limousin from Fr. Cows. Limousin & Parthenaise bulls run with the herd. Calving in August to October with stock sold as stores the following year. Some heifers are brought through to finish. James also purchases 30 dairy calves which are brought through to beef.



Currently the total grazing area runs to 53.2Ha split into 4 blocks. The Objective of this farm is to maximise profit through milk and grass. This is achieved through measuring grass by using Pasture Base and breeding using ICBF. Herdplus provides valuable farm management data on cow performance. This helps the farm identify areas for improvement; Cows have an average maternal index of €142 and terminal index of €76.

In order to achieve maximum weight gain from grass, walking the farm weekly to estimate days ahead and produce high quality leafy grass that is highly digestible, high in energy and low in stem. A rotational grazing system is employed to provide a constant supply of grass to grazing animals.

James has also worked hard to maximise grass growth on his farm by taking soil samples and making an easy to follow fertiliser plan to provide the soil with the nutrients it requires to grow grass. This farm visit provides great opportunity to view & discuss a farm maximising performance from grass.

There will be experts on hand on the day from Teagasc and ICBF to discuss breeding and profit on suckling farms so that you can identify key areas in your farming system that can be improved. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsors Herdplus and IFAC.

Full programme will be available on www.irishgrassland.com or further information contact Maura at 087 9626483. Admission to this event will be by registration only. Delegates who register and prepay for their tickets before the Friday 11th July will get their tickets HALF PRICE. These half price tickets cost only €20 for all IGA members and €40 for non IGA members! Registration fee includes refreshments on arrival, packed Lunch, conference proceedings, bus transfers between farms plus one year's membership FREE to the Irish Grassland Association for all new d/d memberships. **Further information is available at www.irishgrassland.com or by calling Maura on 087 9626483.**

This is a BTAP approved event and this event has sold out three weeks early in previous years. So, if you are thinking of attending, then book today and don't miss out on these excellent offers.



**Thank you to IFAC and Herd Plus
for sponsoring the event**





Irish Grassland Association Sheep Farm Walk Review



The Irish Grassland Association annual sheep event is changing format for 2014. The traditional One day conference and farm walk will be replaced by two afternoon farm walks on July 31st on the farm of Philip Higgins, Screen, Co Sligo and August 7th on the farm of Anthony McShane, Carlingford, Co Louth. Sponsored by Mullinahone Co-op and Sheep Ireland, both events will take place from 3-5pm. The events will focus on breeding quality replacements, grassland management and soil fertility.

Admission is free and both farms will be signposted on the day. This is an STAP approved event.

**For more information call John Noonan
on (087) 2789936**

**FREE ADMISSION TO
ALL IGA MEMBERS
AND A FRIEND.
No registration required.**



**Philip Higgins,
Screen, Co. Sligo.
31st July, 3pm -5pm**

Philip farms 86 hectares carrying 200 ewes and 80 hoggets along with a suckler herd of 45 spring calving suckler cows. The mid season flock of ewes consistently weans 1.8 lambs reared/ewe to the ram while ewe lambs regularly wean 1.4 lambs reared/ewe to the ram. The flock is housed at the beginning of December and are fed good quality silage until 6 weeks pre lambing when they are separated into singles twins and triplets and fed accordingly up to lambing. Meal feeding is continued post lambing until there is adequate grass available. Flock prolificacy is maintained by purchasing replacement ewe lambs at the Mayo mule and greyface sale annually and are mated to Suffolk and texel rams in the autumn. The biggest daughters are in turn kept as replacements and are crossed with a different breed sire enhancing hybrid vigour. Drafting of lambs begins in early June, with all lambs marketed through the Sligo Leitrim Producer group and achieving an average carcase weight of 20kg.

Silage quality is achieved by grazing pre closing and cutting the crop at 6-7 weeks producing high quality leafy silage that helps control winter feed bills. Quality leafy swards are achieved by grazing paddocks out well, topping and taking out paddocks for round bales where necessary. Philip is currently increasing the number of paddocks to improve grass utilisation and quality and intends to increase the flock to 350 sheep to the ram this autumn.

Directions: From Ballina follow signs for Screen. Turn right at sign for Sligo gokarting. From Ballysadare, take first left after church in Screen. Farm will be signposted.



**Anthony Mc Shane,
Carlingford, Co. Louth.
7th August, 3pm – 5pm**

Anthony farms 54ha at Carlingford Co Louth. The 500 ewe midseason lambing flock are made up of Lowland x Blackface Mountain and pure Blackface mountain ewes. Lambing takes place from late March with all ewes usually lambing outdoors. There is a strong focus on producing quality homebred replacements on this farm with Blue Leicester rams selected on maternal traits to cross to the blackface ewes. The biggest daughters of doubles are selected pre weaning for replacements. Also Texel cross Mule lambs are retained and these are mated with Suffolk rams and the Lamb output per ewe consistently averages an impressive 1.6 lambs weaned/ewe from the lowland ewes.

Lambs are marketed through the Monaghan lamb producer group. Grassland management is a top priority with strong emphasis placed on utilising as much grass within the diet of the finishing lamb as possible. A paddock system, regular soil fertility testing and a planned reseeding programme help to maximise the use of grass on this farm.

Directions-Exit 18 off M1, follow signs for Carlingford. Farm will be signposted.



Would like to thank our sponsors Mullinahone Co-op and Sheep Ireland



Dairy Summer Tour Preview

Strategies for successful expansion

By **Paidi Kelly** (Irish Grassland Association and Teagasc) and **George Ramsbottom** (Teagasc).

The Dairy Summer Tour kindly sponsored by AIB takes place on Tuesday 12 August this year and will be held in Laois on the farms of David and Paul Hyland in Ballacolla and David Kerr in Ross, Portlaoise.

The theme of this year's tour is strategies for successful expansion. Both our host farms in this year's Dairy Summer Tour have achieved considerable growth in cow numbers in the last ten years - the Hylands have gone from 120 to 360 cows and David Kerr has gone from 40 to 140 cows. Different strategies have been used on each farm to expand - land leasing, land purchase, contract rearing to increase cow numbers on the milking block, a second milking unit and a milk production partnership. How the farmers made these strategies work will be a major focus of the tour.



Paul & David Hyland Farm Profile

Paul and David Hyland farm in partnership with their mother Lucy outside the village of Clough, near Ballacolla in County Laois. The pair commenced farming in 1996 taking on the 130 British Friesian cows then milked by their late father Frank all year round on a milking platform of 28 ha. Expansion to the present 360 strong dairy herd has been achieved since then through various steps: leasing land adjacent to the out farm and establishing a second milking unit there; land purchase in 2002; a milk production partnership with a Co. Kilkenny dairy farmer in 2010; and more land purchase in 2013 adjacent to the second milking unit. The Kilkenny farm comprises approximately 73 ha of excellent land used for rearing

replacement heifers for the home farms with surplus for sale. Since establishing the second milking unit the herd of cows have been moved from one block to the other depending on grass availability. Next year the plan is to split the herd in two and stock each milking unit at 3.5 cows/ha or 400 cows in total.

Production averaged 430 kg milk solids per cow last year (1,370 kg milk solids per ha) from a predominantly crossbred herd at a whole farm stocking rate of 2.8 LU/ha (3.2 LU/ha on the milking platforms). Herd EBI averages €147 (€47 milk/ €76 fertility). Currently the Hylands continue in winter milk feeling that it has served them well as a tool to retain cows in the herd while expanding.

Having reseeded practically all of the milking platforms over the past 10 years, an average of 14 t DM/ha grew there last year, despite two droughts with approximately 900 kg meal fed per cow.



**David Kerr
Farm Profile**

Delegates will visit the farm of David and Yvonne Kerr who farm 64ha (158 acres) in Ross, just outside of Portlaoise in Co Laois. David took over the farm from his father George in 1996 at which point the then 52 acre farm had 40 dairy cows along with beef, sheep and tillage enterprises. David maintained this enterprise mix for a number of years and focused on low cost efficient farming. With the revision of milk quota rules in 2006 and after being awarded a Nuffield scholarship on dairy expansion David decided to focus solely on his dairy enterprise. By 2010 he had expanded to 107 cows and the following year he purchased 30 acres which bordered the milking platform. There are 140 cows being milked on the farm this year and the plan is to milk 160 cows next year (2.5 cows/ha).

The Kerr farm is an excellent example of maintaining labour efficiency while increasing cow numbers. A student helps out during the busy spring period, maiden heifers are contract reared (all heifers will be contract reared next year) and much of the machinery work e.g. fertilizer spreading is contracted out. A very labour efficient milking parlour (22 units with homemade backing gate and good cow flow) allows David to milk 140 cows per hour. Winter housing to support extra cow numbers is in the form of 140 cow kennels which cost approximately €400/ kennel to construct (excluding any slurry storage).

David has been measuring grass for over 18 years and grew 14tDM/ha on the grazing platform in 2013. Approximately a third of the 65 acre grazing platform is heavy and some of this ground grew as little as 5tDM/ha in 2012 due to the wet weather.

The Kerr herd is one third Jersey crossbred and has an EBI of €195 (€53 milk/ €104 fertility). Fertility performance on the farm is excellent. Empty rates for the last number of years have consistently run under 7% after 13 weeks breeding with no bulls used. Six week calving rate is 78%. Cows produced 409kgMS/cow last year from 600kg of meal (4,850 litres at 3.63% protein and 4.50% fat).



AIB are now in their third year sponsoring the Irish Grassland Association Dairy Summer Tour. Commenting on the event, Eamonn O'Reilly, Agri Advisor, AIB said: *"We are delighted to continue our association with the Irish Grassland Association and commit our support to the Dairy Summer Tour. This year's tour will provide an insight into the expansion experiences of two very progressive dairy operations, who have adopted different expansion strategies. The event provides a further opportunity to examine the fundamentals underpinning successful expansion, the motivations behind individual strategies employed, the challenges encountered and lessons learned along the way".*

The Tour promises to be an excellent event for any current or potential dairy farmer regardless of current herd size or expansion plans. Registration will take place in the Portlaois Rugby Club, Co. Laois (signposted from junction 17 on the M7) from 8.30am. Breakfast rolls and tea/coffee will be provided for those who arrive on time. By registering before Friday the 25th July, you can avail of our pre-paid discounts of 25%. Discount tickets cost €30 for Irish Grassland Association members and €60 for non-members. To avail of this offer post the booking form on the brochure enclosed and your cheque to: Discounted DAIRY Registrations, IGA, Cookstown, Kells, Co. Meath.

Admission is by registration only and early booking is strongly encouraged as our Dairy Conference in January sold out. So, if you are thinking of attending then book today and don't miss out on this excellent offer.

Thank you to AIB for sponsoring the event





IGA Launches Grass Mentoring Programme

Paidi Kelly, Irish Grassland Association Council Member and Teagasc PhD Student.



The Irish Grassland Association 'Grass Mentoring Programme' is being launched this month and will begin this autumn. The programme will give the opportunity for farmers to improve their grassland management skills by accompanying a 'mentor farmer' on his/her weekly grass walk and seeing first-hand how they manage grass. Dairy, beef and sheep farmers are all welcome to apply.

A number of farmers experienced in grassland measuring have already been identified as mentor farmers and more are being sought. Farmers seeking to improve their grassland management will be assigned to a mentor farmer within the nearest locality. They will be able to see first-hand how their mentor farmer manages grass by accompanying them on their weekly grass walk and then seeing what management decisions are made as a result. Through fortnightly visits the mentor group will learn and experience first-hand the key aspects of grassland management – measuring and using the results to make decisions. It's hoped the group will then have developed the skills to manage grass in a similar way on their home farm and improve profitability as a result.

MENTOR FARMERS

Mentor farmers will have very little extra work as a result of the programme. Each farmer will be assigned a group of 5-6 improver farmers and an IGA Regional Development Officer will contact these to confirm when the weekly grass walk takes place. The host farmer just needs to share his/her knowledge and experience as they complete their weekly grass walk. All mentor farmers will receive an IGA Gold Membership Package which includes free membership, free attendance to the IGA conference and summer tour of your choice and a free IGA jacket.

IMPROVER FARMERS

Targeted improver farmers are those who have an interest in improving grassland management on their farm and would like to learn more as regards how they could achieve this. The chance to learn first-hand from an experienced farmer will provide the opportunity to get a better understanding of both how to measure grass and how this can improve farm profitability. It costs €20 to take part in the programme.

If interested in further information as either a potential host or improved farmer please email secretary@irishgrassland.com with your name, contact details, location and farm enterprise. The first farm walks as part of the initial pilot stage of the programme will begin in August. This is an ideal time for the programme to begin as building up a bank of grass in autumn is crucial to extend the grazing season and sets the farm up for spring.

There are a number of Teagasc discussion groups already operating this programme within their groups and the IGA hopes to extend the benefits to other farmers across the country. Grass drives farm profitability and taking part in the programme should lead to a number of improvements such as:

- By knowing how much grass is on the farm you can better control quality leading to improved animal performance.
- Get the confidence to take out surplus as silage which provides an excellent feed buffer in the shoulders of the year or during winter.
- More targeted use of meal and fertilizer means better returns from these and reduced costs.
- Know which paddocks are growing the least grass and target these for improvement e.g. addressing soil fertility issues or reseeding.
- Learn how to use the spring rotation planner, grass wedge and autumn rotation planner to make grassland management easier.



Automatic Milking Systems in Ireland

Dr. Cathriona Foley, Teagasc, Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork.



In Ireland and Europe the uptake of automatic milking systems (AMS) is increasing at an accelerating rate. The main reasons being an improvement in lifestyle, reducing physical work, difficulty in attracting skilled labour, potential to increase milk production (within high input systems) and lower labour costs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that by the end of 2014 there will be 200 robots on the island of Ireland. With the removal of milk quotas in 2015, farmers are now looking towards more labour neutral, economically sustainable methods of herd expansion to increase milk production and are considering robots as a potential option to achieve this. In the south of Ireland the majority of robots currently in operation are integrated with a grazing based system of farming.

In order to determine if automatic milking is a sustainable alternative to conventional manual milking in Irish grass-based systems, the integration of automatic milking and grazing must be researched. Teagasc Moorepark in association with the Irish Grassland Association acquired European Union funding for three years to carry out research on how best to integrate automatic milking with grazing and to define if this integration is an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable option for the future of dairy farming in Ireland. This research involves assessing information generated both on the Teagasc Dairygold research farm in Moorepark and on 7 Irish commercial ("monitor farms") farms that are currently operating automatic milking in a grass-based system.

Voluntary Automatic Milking and Grazing

Automatic milking with grazing relies on the voluntary movement of the cow from the paddock to the automatic milking unit. Cows are motivated to leave the paddock they are in when grass is depleted with the incentive to move to new fresh grass in another paddock. Therefore the grass allocation is critical to optimal cow visits to the AM unit. In order to be granted access to fresh grass cows must first pass through a drafting gate that determines if the cow: (1) is due for milking in the automatic milking unit, or (2) has access to the same paddock she came from, or (3) can progress to a new paddock with fresh grass. The drafting gate in the yard is timed to change either every 12 hours in a 2-way (AB) system or every 8 hours in a 3-way (ABC) system of grazing permitting access to new grass. In a 2-way system the farm is divided into two blocks of land, A and B, and in a 3-way system the farm is divided into 3 blocks of land, A, B and C, that are independent of each other.

3-Way Grazing System Paddock Layout

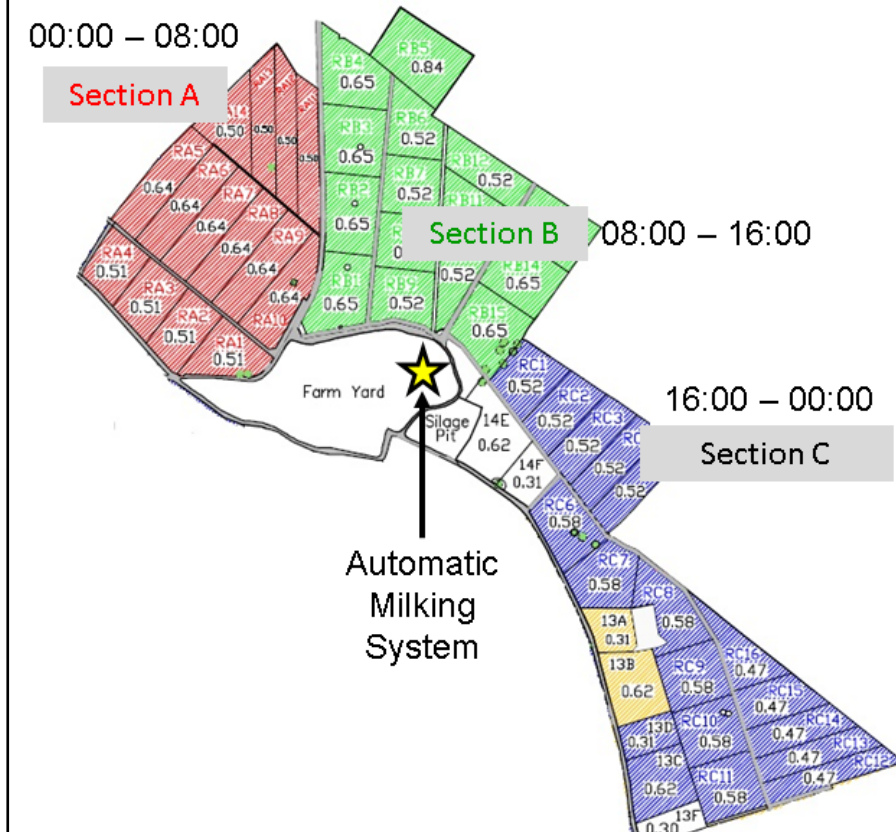


Fig. 1 Layout of AMS farm - cows have access to the grazing sections A, B and C at 8 am, 4 pm and midnight, respectively.

Automatic Milking at the Teagasc Dairygold research farm in Moorepark

The Teagasc Dairygold research farm in Moorepark associated with the automatic milking unit operates a 3-way system of grazing. The farm has a 24 ha milking platform and the land area is divided into three grazing sections of approximately 8 ha each (A, B, C). Cows have access to the grazing sections A, B and C at 8 am, 4 pm and midnight, respectively (Fig. 1).

There are separate entry points, each with non-return texas gates, from each of the three grazing sections to the outer pre-milking yard. Cows pass through a pre-selection gate and they are drafted into the inner pre-milking yard if they are due for milking. Once milked they pass through a post-selection gate that directs

them to one of the three grazing sections depending on the time of the day. If a cow is not due for milking at the pre-selection gate she is drafted along a bypass lane directly to the post-selection gate and straight out to grass in one of the three grazing sections (Fig. 2).

At present there are 70 cows milking on one Fullwood Merlin 225 automatic milking system. The average calving date for the herd is the 24/02/2014, with a start date of 16/01/2014 and end date of 06/04/2014. The herd consists of two heifers, 38 cows in 2nd lactation and 30 cows in 3rd lactation or more. The average economic breeding index for the herd is £189 and the breeds include Holstein Friesians (44), Norwegian Red crosses (14), 100% Jerseys (4) and Jersey Holstein crosses (8).

Cows were on-off grazing from the 3rd to the 27th of February and the herd were fed silage indoors for 16 hours and 3 kg grass DM/cow, grazing outdoors for 8 hours between 8 am

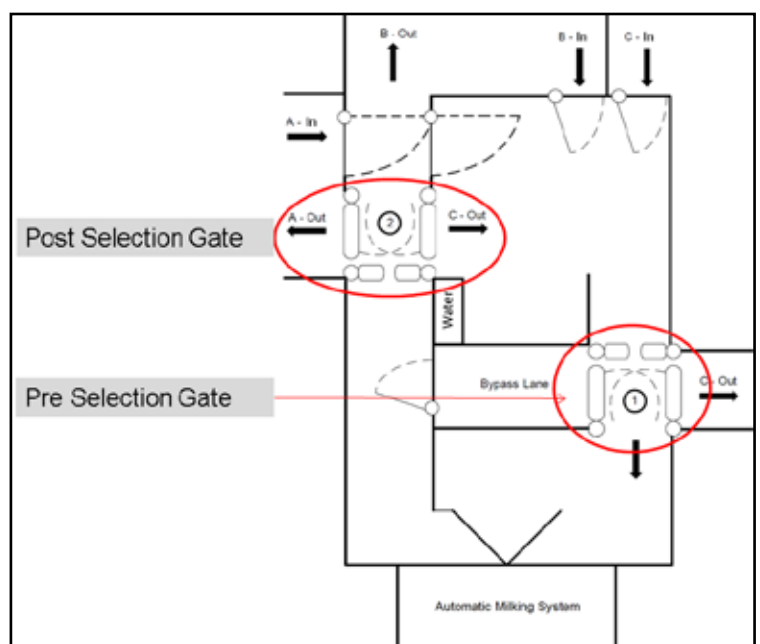


Fig. 2 Selection gates at the AMS unit.

and 4 pm with 4 kg concentrate/cow fed in the AMS each day. Cows were full time outdoors grazing from the 27th of February and concentrate was reduced to 0.5 kg/cow from the 10th of April.

Update on the Current Research

Grazing Management and Performance

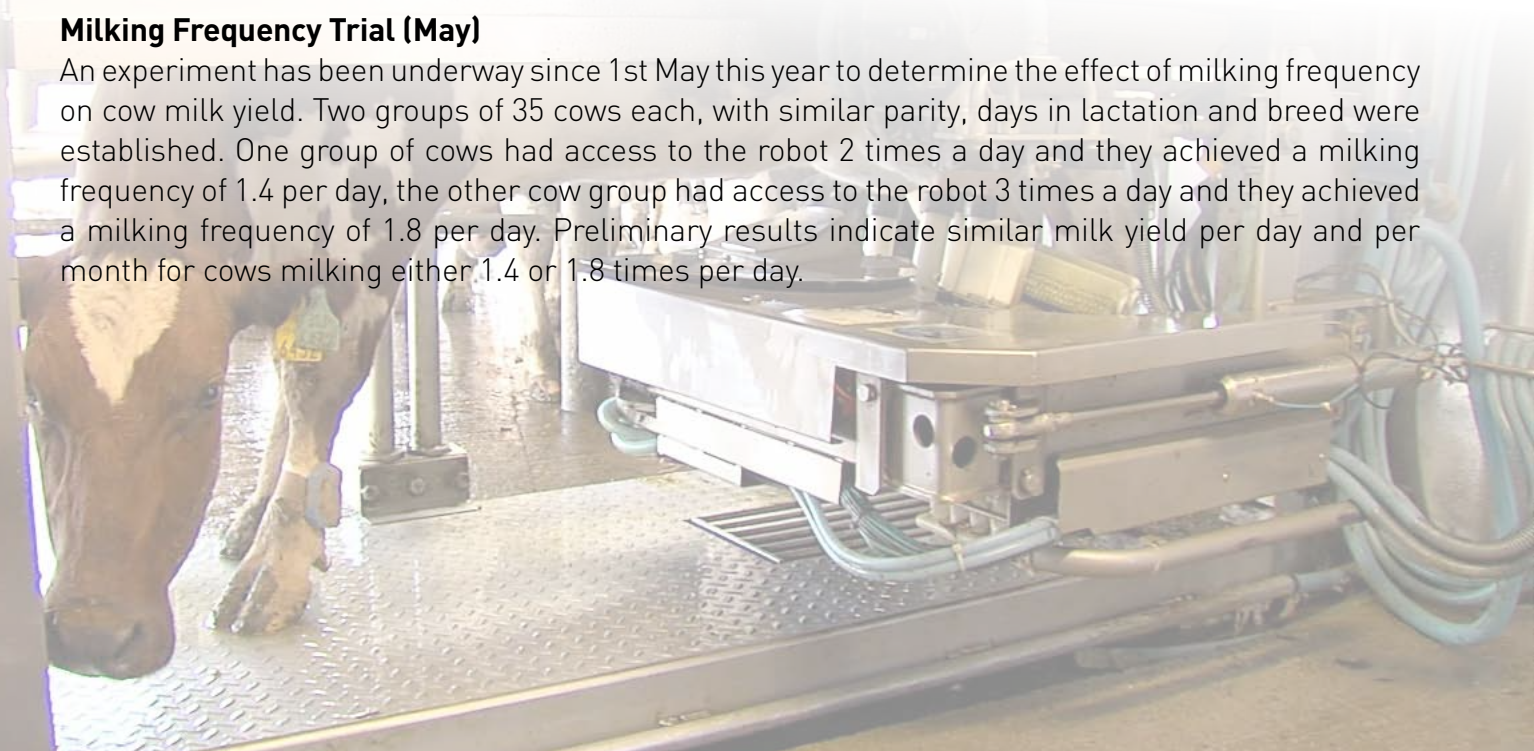
A farm grass walk is undertaken twice a week and a cover is estimated by visual assessment for each paddock in the grazing blocks which are treated as three independent farmlets with regard to grass budgeting. The most recent grass walk, at the time of writing this article, was carried out on 12th June and A, B and C farm covers of 564, 604 and 592 kg DM/ha, respectively, were observed, with farm cover per cow at 181, 179 and 157 kg DM/LU, respectively. The average growth rate across all blocks was 71 kg DM/ha/day and farm demand was 58 kg DM/ha/day. On the AMS farm the paddocks are currently (at the time of writing) in the 4th rotation in each of the grazing sections. During 1st, 2nd and 3rd rotations the average covers grazed were 1547, 1459 and 1448 kg DM/ha in A, B and C, respectively, ranging between 500 and 2500 kg grass DM/ha. Across the three grazing sections the average pre-grazing height was 11 cm ranging between 5 and 20 cm, and post-grazing height was 5 cm ranging between 3 and 9 cm. During March, April and May, 12.1, 13.6 and 15.9 kg grass DM was offered to each cow/day with an additional 3.6, 1.2 and 1.3 kg concentrate offered at the AMS, respectively.

Peak milk production from the AMS unit per day was recorded during April at 1465 kg (range 1155 to 1666 kg) when the full complement of 70 cows were milking. Milk production per day from the AMS unit ranged from 543 to 1459 kg during March and from 1010 to 1492 kg during May. Average production/cow per day was 19.8, 20.8 and 18.3 kg and milking frequency was 1.7, 1.7 and 1.6 times per day in March, April and May, respectively. A point to note is that an experiment on milking frequency commenced in May and this may have influenced the average milking frequency for the herd.

Milk composition data during the March to May period indicated average fat, protein and lactose percentages of 4.58%, 3.54% and 4.81%, respectively. Milk somatic cell counts have been low with levels of 110×10^3 cells/ml, 87×10^3 cells/ml and 89×10^3 cells/ml recorded during the past three months.

Milking Frequency Trial (May)

An experiment has been underway since 1st May this year to determine the effect of milking frequency on cow milk yield. Two groups of 35 cows each, with similar parity, days in lactation and breed were established. One group of cows had access to the robot 2 times a day and they achieved a milking frequency of 1.4 per day, the other cow group had access to the robot 3 times a day and they achieved a milking frequency of 1.8 per day. Preliminary results indicate similar milk yield per day and per month for cows milking either 1.4 or 1.8 times per day.





JULY

CONTRACT REARING INFORMATION EVENING

Shinagh Farm Bandon, Co.Cork

17th July 7.30pm.

No registration required.

For more information call Máire Ahern McCarthy (087)2354353.

Further updates will follow on the IGA website and in local press.

BEEF SUMMER TOUR (SEE PAGE 12)

Kilkenny and Waterford.

Tuesday 29th July.

Registration is essential

SHEEP FARM WALK (SEE PAGE 14)

Screen, Co. Sligo.

Thursday 31st July.

No registration required.

For more information call John Noonan on (087) 2789936.

AUGUST

SHEEP FARM WALK (SEE PAGE 14)

Carlingford, Co.Louth

Thursday 7th August.

No registration required.

For more information call John Noonan on (087) 2789936.

IGA DAIRY SUMMER TOUR (SEE PAGE 16)

Portlaois, Co Laois.

Tuesday 12th August.

Registration is essential

SEPTEMBER

IGA AGM (SEE PAGE 5)

Horse and Jockey Hotel.

Thursday 18th September at 10am.

Registration is essential by 4th September

**More topical events are already being organised for the Autumn/Winter.
Further updates will be made on our Website, Facebook and twitter.**

Irish Grassland Association, Kells, Co Meath, Ireland.
www.irishgrassland.com

General Information: secretary@irishgrassland.com
Tel: (087) 96 26 483 Opened: Tuesdays and Thursdays



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