Irish Grassland Association

Newsletter Issue No. 28 Summer 2015

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

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IRISH GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION - NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2015

Irish Grassland Association President's Address

Dear Member,

Paul Crosson
President of the IGA 2014/15

We are now well into the busy summer season for the Irish Grassland Association. In this edition of the newsletter we feature our normal combination of event reviews and previews, farmer focus articles, an opinion piece from an industry specialist and technical articles on topical issues.

The Irish Grassland Association held two events in May; a regional dairy event in Co. Cork and our national Sheep Farm Walk in Co. Waterford. Both days showcased blueprints for profitable farm systems and highlighted how farms can adapt management practices to suit their own farm circumstances. On 5 May, the farm of Carmel and Geoffrey Wycherley hosted the spring regional dairy event (page 8). The Wycherley's have expanded in recent years to the current herd of 220 spring-calving cows. The challenges in expanding a herd in terms of land and labour availability were discussed and Geoffrey's advice based on his experience can be summarised as follows; plan carefully, expand organically and source quality labour as the workload of a growing herd increases. Our national sheep event was held on 19 May in Co. Waterford on the farm of Ned Morrissey (page 6). Of particular interest was the low cost system ran on this farm with ewes outwintered on fodder beet. The quality of grassland management was evident on the day and was highlighted as an important driver of output on the highly stocked farmed. The event demonstrated the opportunities for profitable sheep production systems through a combination of low costs, excellent animal performance and high output.

We have two very exciting events coming up over the coming months. Firstly, on June 30, the Irish Grassland Association travels to Co. Longford for our national Beef Conference and Farm Walk (page 14). Given the expected increase in dairy cow numbers and the associated increase in dairy beef calves, the theme of this year's event is dairy calf-to-beef and the host farmer is well-known beef and sheep farmer and IGA council member, Kevin Farrell. Kevin operates a calf to beef system and will show how careful management around calf rearing and best practice in grassland and feeding management results in a gross margin of close to €1,000/ha being achieved on the farm. The morning conference also deals with aspects of dairy calf to beef systems including papers on nutrition, health and production systems. The Dairy Summer Tour travels west on 28 July to well know farmers Noel O'Toole and Henry Walsh (page 16). These farms are at very different stages of expansion and so the event provides very timely insights given the current interest on many dairy farms to increase output.

We continue our "Year in My Wellies" series where young farmers update us on their programme of studies and farming experiences (pages 10 and 11). In addition to Barry Reilly and Denise Weeks, in this edition we profile Matthew Murphy, who is from a beef/tillage background and has recently taken up a position with the Newford Herd in Athenry, a Teagasc-Dawn Meats Partnership. Another young farmer featured in this edition of the newsletter is dairy farmer Kevin Moran (Farmer Focus, page 12), the 2013 Teagasc/FBD Student of the Year and 2014 Nuffield scholar. Kevin updates us on management on his home farm and his experiences on his Nuffield study tour.

The importance of export markets for our primary agricultural sector cannot be overemphasised. In particular, our beef and dairy sectors export over 85% of farm produce. The grass-based nature of our farm sector underpins much of its sustainability credentials. The Bord Bia Origin Green Ireland initiative aims to further develop these credentials with regard to sustainable production systems. At farm level, Origin Green Ireland is supported by the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Schemes. Padraig Brennan details the background and operation of these schemes and their link to Origin Green Ireland on page 30. Additional technical articles this month come from FBD on their farm safety campaign (page 20), Teagasc on herd (page 22) and flock (page 26) health and from Rosalyn Drew (Drummonds and IGA council member; page 33) who describes Teagasc Greenacres calf to beef programme.

Finally, can I remind you of our AGM on 17 September (page 5). This event is held at the Heritage Hotel. Killenard, Co. Laois and all members are encouraged to attend. Details of this and all other events described above can be found on our website www.irishgrassland.com or by contacting our Office Manager, Maura Callery, secretary@irishgrassland.com.

Paul Crosson

Paul Crosson
President of the Irish Grassland Association 2014/15

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DATE SET FOR THE 2015 AGM

Thursday 17th September at 10am
Heritage Hotel Killenard, Co. Laois

The 2015 AGM of the Irish Grassland Association will take place on Thursday 17th September at the Heritage Hotel, Killenard, Co. Laois at 10am. 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 3rd of September. As well as the election, a round up of the year's activities will be presented, as will the 2014 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. I look forward to meeting you at the AGM.

Registration is essential. Please email Maura (secretary@irishgrassland.com) by 4th September to register if you wish to attend the AGM.

Paul Crosson

Paul Crosson
President of the Irish Grassland Association 2014/15

IGA Sheep Farm Walk 2015 Review

Philip Creighton
Teagasc AGRIC, Athenry,
Co. Galway and Irish Grassland
Association Council

Over 100 farmers attended this year's Irish Grassland Association (IGA) sheep farm walk on Tuesday 19th of May on the farm of Ned Morrissey, Dunhill, Co Waterford. Ned runs a mid-season lambing flock of 370 ewes on 30.3 ha (75 acres) in Dunhill, Waterford. The sheep enterprise is run alongside a significant tillage enterprise and focuses on finding the best balance between maximising output and reducing labour input. The farming system has witnessed significant changes in recent years with a switch to wintering ewes on grazing beet in-situ and outdoor lambing greatly cutting workload and costs. Grassland management is also excellent and combined with fodder beet provides the foundation to push stocking rate to the limit at 13 ewes/ha (5.26 ewes/acre). The three main areas of interest on the day were grassland, out wintering on fodder beet and outdoor lambing.

Grassland
Grass growth is maximised and optimum quality maintained by operating a rotational grazing system. Ned explained that the system that works best for him is batching animals into three big groups of about 120 ewes and their lambs. Each group has access to four to five, five acre paddocks which are also split temporarily to better manage grass quality in periods of peak growth. The dry hoggets are also split across the three groups and graze with ewes and lambs to minimise the number of grazing groups and to ensure paddocks are grazed quickly reducing the incidence of grazing regrowths and offering fresh grass more frequently.

Out wintering on fodder beet
Fodder beet is grown in two grassland areas measuring 2.5 acres and is incorporated into a reseeding programme. The area where fodder beet is grown is combined with a 2.5 acre runback. The runback area acts as a sacrifice paddock for supplementing silage and feed/mineral buckets and is used for growing the crop the following year while the fodder beet area is reseeded and incorporated back into the grazing rotation. Each 2.5 acres provides sufficient fodder to strip graze a batch of 180 ewes (three breeding groups combined into two groups) from mid-November to the end of February. Ned explained the worst he can expect in a bad year is 30 t/acre (fresh weight) with average yields of 35-40 t fresh/acre regularly achieved.

Outdoor lambing
Twin bearing ewes are removed from the beet two to three weeks pre lambing and are given access to temporary grazing from a local dairy farmer. Access to fresh grass meets the increased protein demands in late pregnancy, ensuring ewes lamb with sufficient colostrum. This boosts condition and also helps colostrum yield and quality. On returning from temporary grazing, twin bearing ewes are set stocked in seven paddocks around the farmyard in groups of 25 to 35 ewes (about seven ewes per acre). Closing paddocks from late October onwards is critical to have sufficient grass to eliminate supplementary feeding

pre-lambing. Single bearing ewes remain on the beet until a few days prior to lambing, receiving concentrate supplementation once twin bearing ewes are removed. This gets ewes accustomed to switching diets ahead of housing where the aim is to cross foster triplet lambs onto single bearing ewes. Triplet ewes are housed after scanning.

Other topics
Two other aspects of the day which attracted keen interest were a presentation by Kevin Farrell, Longford sheep and beef farmer and an IGA Council Member on the benefits of producer and purchasing groups and a presentation by Teagasc sheep specialist Frank Hynes on the use of faecal egg counts (FEC) and interpreting the STAP faecal test as an aid for worm control. Frank Hynes presentation is covered in an article on page 26 of this newsletter.

Kevin outlined the background to the Longford Lamb Producer Group, set up in the early 1990's by a small group of local farmers with a common goal – selling lambs within a group to achieve a better price and also to find a more convenient means for members to market and trade their lambs. The group has grown to a steady membership of approximately 60 members. Kevin said that a significant factor determining what the group delivers is the commitment group members show stating you get back what you are willing to put in with a factory. Groups will have their share of ups and downs but when everyone knows clearly exactly what is required of them with written rules, it makes the group easier to run. From a quality perspective, lambs produced better meet market specifications which ultimately benefit the quality of lamb delivered to consumers. This has been achieved within the group by holding information evenings focusing on marketing on lambs from selecting lambs for slaughter, optimum carcase weights, fat cover, etc. A financial bonus which consistently rewards for quality is a major aspect in helping to entice members to produce to certain specifications. They have developed a strong working relationship between the group and the factory. There has to be benefits for both sides with members rewarded for delivering a quality product and factories guaranteed that they have a consistent high quality product to work with.

Kevin is also involved in a purchasing group and feels that this group is possibly delivering the best benefit to him. The group is made up of sub-groups who have responsibility for different inputs or services. Like the lamb group, deals are negotiated that best meet the needs of all members. The group meets eight times annually with each group member required to attend at least four meetings and pay an annual membership fee. A yellow card system is employed whereby each member is sanctioned for not adhering to written rules the group agrees upon together. Kevin says that confidentiality is a key aspect of the purchasing group to allow input and service providers negotiate with confidence.

In his presentation conclusion, Kevin says that as well as the sharing of new ideas and relationship building with factories and farm suppliers, an aspect of the group that is often forgotten is that it provides a social setting for farmers to meet up. He said that to really maximise the benefits of the group, there should be a mixture of business and also a social setting that provides a platform to interact on an informal basis.

The Irish Grassland Association would like to sincerely thank Ned and his family for hosting the event, Kevin and Frank for their presentations and Teagasc Dungarvan, especially Ned's advisor Paddy O'Brien, for assistance in running this event.

Review of IGA spring event 2015

Noreen Begley,
Irish Grassland Association
Regional Development Officer

The spring Irish Grassland Association (IGA) regional event was hosted on the farm of Geoffrey Wycherley in Lislevane, Bandon, Co. Cork on the 5th May 2015. The event was sponsored by IFAC Accountants. Even though the day got off to a wet start, that did not stop the crowds from gathering quickly. Approximately 250 people attended this event.

They were two main points of focus for the day. Firstly Geoffrey's farm. This section of the day was chaired by Michael Bateman, IGA Council Member. Geoffrey is currently milking 220 cows in a spring calving dairy herd. The milking platform is 60 ha which means Geoffrey has a stocking rate of 3.67 LU/ha. The young stock are reared on an outside farm. The farm is part of the Teagasc Timoleague Catchment Area. This means the farm is soil sampled on a regular basis.

Breeding policies on the farm are to increase milk yield, maintain solids percentage and improve fertility. The bulls selected for 2015 have over 30 kg fat and protein and greater than 150 kg milk. The bulls chosen reflect the farm policies and with a calving interval of 362 days this year, it is obvious that fertility is also an important component of the breeding policy.

The second focus of the day was financial. Geoffrey presented this with the help of his IFAC accountant Brian Denn. The first part looked at net profit on the farm over a number of years and also capital investment in recent years.

A discussion forum was also held. This was chaired by Peter Young. The panel included Austin Finn, Land Mobility Service; John McNamara, Teagasc; Michael Brady, Brady Group; and Declan McEvoy, IFAC Accountants. An in-depth discussion took place covering such issues as financial management, labour and taxation.

A Year in My Wellies

Barry Reilly
Dairy Farmer, Co. Cavan

With calving season well out of the way the focus now changes to getting cows back in calf. Three weeks of pre-breeding was completed and anything that hadn't shown heat (11%) were scanned. Some of these were just not calved long enough and needed more time while others were given a shot of estrumate and some metricured two days later due to being dirty. We started to breed the heifers, which are away from the milking platform on the 5th of May. We were using scratch cards and a vasectomised bull with them. 35% have been served to natural heat and everything else was given a shot of prostaglandin on day 7. All of the heifers bar four have been served to AI after 14 days. The stock bulls went out with them Tuesday 19th of May. Cows were started slightly later on the 8th of May and after 7 days 30% of the herd have been served. After day 15, 44% of the herd were served and after day 24, 94% of the herd was served. The remaining cows that were not served were scanned and given a 7 day CIDR where they will be fixed time AI tomorrow (10 June). A vasectomised bull is with the cows at present as activity has slown day to help ensure we see repeats. We are using a team of 13 AI bulls with a weighted average of €312 EBI. AI will be used for 6 weeks followed by stock bulls for 6 weeks.

Ground conditions held up well considering the amount of rain we had over the first two weeks of May. We had not used the strip wire since the beginning of the second rotation (7th April) with the exception of a one-week period when we ran short of grass (130 kg DM/cow and poor weather forecast) and 10 acres of silage ground was grazed. There was a pre-grazing cover of 2300 kg DM/ha on both of these and both were topped afterwards to ensure quality in the next round. Cows are back on 36 hour allocations and off meal since April 7th. They are milking 21 litres at 4.44% fat and 3.62% protein (1.7 kg MS/cow). Growth rate today (June 9) was 55 kg DM/ha, average farm cover is 673 kg DM/ha or 170 kg DM/LU with demand of 65 Kg DM/ha. Pre-grazing yields are back at 1400 kg DM/ha. This may be slightly on the low side and may be a reason why the farm is only growing 55 kg DM/ha along with the desperate week we had last week. The farm has received 140 units of N with silage ground receiving slightly more. Soil samples showed a lack of P in a certain half of the farm so they were all topped up with a bag of 0-16-0 three weeks ago. We reseeded 10 acres just over 3 weeks ago, this was sprayed off, disced twice, land levelled, sown and rolled. The mixture we went with contained Drumbo, Clanrye, Aberchoice and Abergain. We hope to have silage cut and in by Friday of this week.

Next week we are based in the Paddy O'Keffe centre in Moorepark. On Wednesday we are under the guidance of Matt Ryan and are going to visit Bill and Audrey O'Keffe's farm for a financial analysis session. On Thursday we have Brendan Horan to go through mid season grazing management, followed by an exam in Dairy Technology and Laurence Shaloo to help us with our six year plan. On Friday we are going to visit the Teagasc Greenfield farm in Killkenny where we will complete the grass analysis with Abigail Ryan, followed by a session with Laurence again on the financial outlook of the farm includidng a SWOT analysis.

A Year in My Wellies

Denise Weeks,
Dairy Business
Degree Student, UCD

It has been a busy few weeks both in Limerick and in Dublin. I sat my last exam in UCD on the 15th of May bringing to an end my 4 years in Dairy Business. At home things have been very busy also. We started AI on the 29th of April. We made the decision this year to go 100% AI on the cows – 9 weeks dairy followed by 2 weeks of a short gestation angus bull KYA. By using a short gestation bull for the last two weeks we hope to condense calving into a 10 week period. We AI'd the heifers for 2 weeks and homebred stock bulls have now been let off with them. 84% of the heifers were bulled in the two weeks. Breeding has gone well to date with a 89% 24 day submission rate in the cows. The vasectomised bull has been let in to help us pick up cows bulling but we have had very few repeats to date.

After the wet weather we experienced in early May the past week of sunshine has been a welcome respite. Grass growth is flying here →80 kg DM/ha/day. Average farm cover was 915 kg DM/ha on the 25th of May so we have taken out 5 ha for bales which has brought the cover down to 193 kg DM/LU. This is higher than we'd like but grazing was restricted over the last two weeks as we were putting in a new water system. The much needed upgrade means we now have 40 mm pipe and new 400 gallon troughs installed throughout the farm.

We are following the cows with a bag of 24-2.5-5 after grazing at present. Stocking rate is 3.7 LU/ha on the milking platform and 2.6 LU/ha across the whole farm. We will continue to take out surpluses as baled silage on the milking platform over the next few weeks. The plan is to cut the main silage crop in early June. Previously we used bales only but with a new silage slab put down earlier in the year we are going to have a silage pit at home for the first time in years. We are currently milking 185 cows. Production is at 23 litres at 4.2% fat and 3.75% protein (1.88 kgs milk solids) and SCC of 78. We are happy enough with this, of the 185 cows 55 are first calvers and 46 are second calvers.

I have spent the last few weeks at home and am currently looking for a job. A few of my friends have found jobs already but the majority are still looking. A large contingent has jetted off to the States on J1's and are making me very jealous with their updates. It has been nice to have a bit of time off at home after a busy few weeks in Dublin. I am a big hurling fan and am hoping Limerick continue in their winning ways throughout the summer.

A Year in My Wellies

Matthew Murphy,
Farm Manager, Newford Herd,
Athenry, Co. Galway

My name is Matthew Murphy and I was born and reared on a mixed tillage and livestock farm near Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. I completed my Green Cert. in Agriculture in 2014 at Teagasc, Kildalton and in January of this year I took up a new position as Farm Manager on the newly established Newford Herd in Athenry, Co. Galway. The project is a joint partnership between Teagasc and Dawn Meats, and the aim of the project is to demonstrate best practice technologies in a suckler-to-beef system on a farm situated in the West of Ireland. Farm size is 55.8 ha and the system we will be running is a finishing system finishing heifers off grass at 18-20 months and steers at 22-24 months. I have sole responsibility for the day-to-day running of the herd and my duties include general stock care and grassland management. We aim to calve 100 cows in 2016. It's been busy few months on the farm with the calving period from February to May. The aim next year is to calve the cows from 20th February to 1st May. We have also just completed installing new drinkers and fencing to aid us in managing grass correctly during the grazing season. Grass growth has been pretty good all spring and we currently have about 21 acres (89 bales) taken out as surplus silage.

These were paddocks that had got too strong (over 10 cm) for grazing. We hope to feed this to weanlings next winter as it should make top quality silage. We are measuring grass on a weekly basis and growth for the last two weeks of May was running at 70-80 kg/DM/ha while our demand is around 55 kg/DM/ha. We will continue to take out strong paddocks for the next few months to help maintain quality in our swards. We currently have 21 days grazing ahead of stock. Silage is due to be cut on 2nd June with this first cut earmarked for our dry suckler cows. Breeding started on 7th May and we have synchronized 70 of the cows in two batches. Cows are being artificially inseminated to high terminal index bulls and then Simmental and Charolais stock bulls are being used to clean up. We have quite a lot of reseeding to do on the farm with 12 ha (30 acres) earmarked for reseeding this year. The first 9 acres were reseeded on 27th May with single stands of Glenveagh and Abergain. It was sprayed off with Gallup on 27th April and disced, power-harrowed, seed sown and rolled. It received 3 tonne of lime/acre and 3 bags of 10:10:20 at sowing. I am delighted to be working on this project and I am really glad I have chosen agriculture as my career path. No day is the same in my job and I get a real kick out of seeing stock perform well.

Farmer Focus - Kevin Moran, Diary Farmer

Name:	Kevin Moran
Age:	22
County:	Galway
Farm size:	34.69 ha
Cow numbers:	100
Cow type:	Jersey/Holstein Friesian crossbreds

Having grown up on a dairy farm the passion for dairying was there from an early age. I am the youngest of 11 children. I hail from Claremorris, Co. Mayo. I attended Mountbellew Agricultural College for two years where I obtained a Certificate in Agriculture. I started out milking 72 cows in spring of 2013, mid-way through my course, after obtaining a long term lease on a 35 ha block from my uncle in Caherlistrane, Co. Galway. I was lucky in that most facilities and infrastructure was already in place as it was originally a dairy farm. I was awarded Student of the Year at Mountbellew and went on to win Teagasc National Student of the Year.

In 2014 my heifers were contract reared which allowed me to increase herd size to 100 cows. Contract rearing of heifers has worked very well for me from an economic perspective, while also simplifying my system and thus reducing labour. I have found it far easier to milk an extra few rows of cows and manage one mob rather than running and racing to out farms and managing 3 or 5 mobs. It allows me to pay attention to detail during the crucial times of year with cows such as breeding and calving and improving KPI's, however it must make sense economically and can only do so if the extra output justifies the rearer's bill.

Three years in to my farming career, upon reflection I can say I got a lot of things wrong and made a lot of mistakes, all of which I have learned from. The thing I found most difficult to come across as a new entrant was clarity. I had access to a lot of advice from Teagasc, neighbours, discussion groups, family, etc. However at times they seemed to contradict each other which resulted in me being confused and ultimately indecisive. The key I think is to firstly become crystal clear on what system suits your farm, identify the key drivers, cow type and goals for the business, and then you can filter all that advice and guidance down to what is relevant to you.

Going forward the two KPI's which are most relevant to my business are 6 week calving rate and tonnes of grass utilised per ha. Last year I utilised 10.8 tonnes grass DM/ha having grown 12.8 tonnes DM/ha. This year I calved 72% in six weeks. The target is to calf 90% in six weeks and utilise 13 tonnes DM/ha. Teagasc research has found that for each 1% a farm improves its 6 week calving rate, net profit per cow increases by €9.26. Research has also shown that each ton of grass DM grown is worth €160-180 increase in profit which means that by achieving these two goals I can improve farm profit by almost €29,000. The four key areas which I try focus all my time on are grassland management, herd health, breeding and financial monitoring. A thing I have come to understand is that genetics are just paper and ink until there is the management to bring them to life.

In the past year I was also fortunate enough to have been awarded a Nuffield Scholarship. Nuffield is an amazing organisation which invests in agriculture by investing in its people. My study is based around young farmers obtaining finance, particularly landless or poorly secured young and expanding dairy farmers. I have just arrived home from my global focus tour where I travelled with five Australian scholars as well as one New Zealand and one French scholar to America, Europe and South Africa. Nuffield opens doors that you would not have access to by yourself. We visited a 230 cow dairy farm in Kenya where cows are milked twice daily by hand. We met some very successful individuals who started with nothing and today have huge multinational companies. None more so than Michael Horsch, who at the age of 21 borrowed money from his two uncles to make them two min till cultivators as the market did not offer one of its kind at that time. Today Michael's company has an annual turnover of €258 million. The take home message for me after gaining a brief insight into agriculture in 8 countries in three continents is that each country has their own competitive advantage, for example in America it is their ability to produce grain, and in Australia they achieve efficiency through economies of scale. It is how well a country is utilising their competitive advantage which defines how competitive they truly are on the global front. In Ireland we have the climate, soils and knowledge to grow grass, however we need to realise that most of our other inputs are 1.5 times the cost of the same inputs in America. My scholarship has been kindly sponsored by Aurivo.

Irish Grassland Association 2015 Beef Conference

Adam Woods,
Teagasc Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Grange and Irish Grassland Association Council

Dairy calf-to-beef systems – exploring the potential for profit

This year's Irish Grassland Association Beef Conference and Farm Walk heads to Ballymahon in Co. Longford on Tuesday 30th June. The theme of this year's conference is dairy beef and the title is "**Dairy calf-to-beef - exploring the potential profit"**. The event is kindly sponsored by Bonanza Calf Nutrition. The expansion of the dairy herd in Ireland over the next number of years could provide some opportunities for beef farmers to increase dairy beef output. The indoor session of the conference will focus on the technical aspects of dairy calf-to-beef production with three papers being presented on economics, nutrition and health and a discussion forum on the future of dairy calf-to-beef systems with representatives from Teagasc, Bord Bia and UCD. The afternoon session will be on the farm of well-known farmer Kevin Farrell, Ballymahon, Co. Longford and topics to be covered on the farm include the farm plan and financial performance, grassland management on the farm, the calf rearing process and market outlook for dairy calf-to-beef in the future.

To book your place at the Beef Conference log on to www.irishgrassland.com or phone Maura Callery on 087 9626483.

Speaker Profiles

Dr. Rob Prendiville, Teagasc, Animal and Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Grange Dunsany, Co. Meath
"Profitable dairy calf-to-beef production systems"

Robert Prendiville is a beef researcher at Teagasc, Grange. His research includes dairy calf-to-beef and suckler systems. He is currently project leader on three studies at Grange; dairy bull beef production, early maturing dairy crossbred heifer and steer production, and validation of the Replacement Index for suckler cows. Robert studied Agricultural Science at UCD and thereafter completed a PhD at Teagasc, Moorepark where his work focused on Jersey Crossbreeding in the Dairy Herd. After his PhD he began to work in beef research at Johnstown Castle and is now based at Teagasc Grange. Topics pertinent to his research include establishing blueprints for dairy calf-to-beef production systems that are profitable for producers and marketable for processors. His research work is very much focused on optimising animal production from low input sustainable pasture based production systems. Robert joined the Council of the Irish Grassland Association in 2012, and elected to the Council for a three year term at the 2013 AGM.

Finbarr Kiernan MRCVS, Finbarr Kiernan Veterinary, Cavan
"Top ten tips for rearing health calves"

Finbarr Kieran was born and reared in Leitrim and he now lives and works in Cavan. In 2001 he set up his veterinary practice "Finbarr Kiernan Veterinary". His practice has grown in the past number of years and he covers a wide area spanning much of Cavan and parts of Monaghan, Leitrim and Longford. His paper is titled "Top ten health tips for rearing healthy calves" and includes some very practical tips on how to keep calves healthy during the rearing stage. Finbarr commented "over the past 12 months our practice has seen an increase in the number of drystock farmers embarking on a calf rearing enterprise to complement their existing drystock enterprise. While many of these clients are extremely tentative stock men, for some this is the first time they would have reared calves on their farm. My paper is aimed at these farmers and indeed anybody in the business of calf rearing and provides practical guidelines on rearing healthy calves. With young calves, attention to detail is very important and the paper will cover the important points from a health point of view".

Tom Warren, Bonanza Calf Nutrition

Tom Warren began his career as technical manager with Golden Maverick and held a number of commercial roles in Ireland and the UK. During this time he developed plant based fat blends, new anti-scour agents and once-a-day calf milk replacers in conjunction with Teagasc, St. Vincent's hospital and ADAS. Nearly 8 years ago he set up Bonanza Calf Nutrition with a number of colleagues who had worked with Golden Maverick. This new company was set up to focus on ingredients like skim milk and buttermilk and once-a-day milk feeding systems. Bonanza has carried out trial work with various bodies including INRA in France and Harper Adams University in the UK, and its products are used by farmers in Italy, France and the British Isles.

Kevin Farrell, Corabola, Co. Longford (Farmer host for afternoon session)

The outdoor afternoon session will be held on Kevin Farrell's farm just outside Ballymahon, Co. Longford. Kevin farms a mixed enterprise lambing 300 ewes and rearing 150 calves from 2 weeks of age to finish. Kevin farms 75 ha in total with 40 ha devoted to the cattle enterprise and 35 ha devoted to the sheep enterprise. Over the past two years Kevin has concentrated on rearing healthy calves, maximising output from his farm and increasing the amount of grazed grass in the diets of all animals on the farm. The system is working with Kevin returning a gross margin on his cattle enterprise in 2014 of €956/ha. A range of topics will be discussed on the farm with experts from Teagasc, Bord Bia and the wider industry available to discuss all aspects of Kevin's system. Kevin will also discuss the reasons he switched his system from a traditional suckling to weanling system to a calf-to-beef system, and the positives and negatives of changing his system.

Conference Programme

9.30 am	Arrival Tea/Coffee at the Rustic Inn Hotel
10.20 am	Conference Opening - Dr Paul Crosson, IGA President
10.30 am	Profitable Dairy calf to beef production systems - Dr Robert Prendiville, Teagasc
11.00 am	Getting Calf Nutrition right - Tom Warren, Bonanza Calf Nutrition
11.30 am	Top 10 tips for rearing healthy calves - Finbarr Kiernan MRCVS
12.00 pm	Discussion Forum with conference speakers and Mark Zeig, Bord Bia and Alan Kelly UCD
12.30 pm	Lunch
1.20 pm	Depart in buses to host farmer Kevin Farrell, Ballymahon
1.35 pm	Arrive on farm 1. Farm plan and financial performance 2. Grassland management on the farm 3. The calf rearing process on the Farrell farm 4. Market outlooks and industry specs
3.40 pm	Close conference and depart Farm
4.00 pm	Arrive back at hotel

We would like to thank our sponsor Bonanza Calf Nutrition

BONANZA calf nutrition

Preview: Irish Grassland Association Dairy Summer Tour 2015

Donal Patton, William Morris and Emer Kennedy,
Irish Grassland Association Council Members

The 2015 Irish Grassland Association Dairy Summer Tour will take place on Tuesday 28 July in Co. Galway. The event is once again kindly sponsored by AIB. This year's tour will continue the theme of dairy expansion of previous years and will showcase two farmers at different stages of the expansion process. Noel O'Toole, Killimor has grown his business from 75 cows in 2005 to 160 in 2015 and is at the stage of consolidation with a focus primarily on increasing already impressive efficiencies. The tour will contrast this with the continuing expansion of Henry Walsh, Oranmore who has grown from 160 cows in 2012 to 270 in 2015 and plans to grow further. While both farmers are at different stages in the expansion process the tour will highlight that the basics for each business still revolve around key areas like cow type, rigorous cost control and high levels of grass in the cow's diet. Both farmers will give valuable insights into how they successfully expanded their herd, lessons learned and key areas which should be focussed on in every dairy farm business.

Noel O'Toole, a past winner of the prestigious Dairy Farmer of the Year Competition, farms a milking platform of 41 ha in Killimor, Co. Galway. Noel has been a committed grassland farmer for many years and his unflinching focus on increasing grass production and utilisation from his farm is a key driver of his success. Through improvements in grassland management the output of milk solids per ha has increased by 32% in the past eight years with a staggering 1585 kg MS/ha produced in 2014. This increase has been driven by increased stocking rate with output per cow remaining similar over that period of time. Last year Noel milked 160 crossbred cows at a stocking rate of 3.85 cows/ha on the milking platform. The 41 ha milking platform is capable of supporting the herd throughout lactation with surplus bales harvested being used for buffer feeding when deficits arise. Winter feed consists of a combination of bales made on outside blocks and also purchased bales, this system has allowed Noel to achieve an excellent output per ha while maintaining a low cost base. Regular grass measurement and budgeting have allowed Noel to match his stocking rate to the grass growing potential of the farm over time with an impressive 13.1 t DM/ha utilised in 2014.

Noel believes strongly in breeding a cow that suits his system instead of changing the system to suit the cow. He has been focused on breeding robust animals that can graze in all conditions and can achieve a compact

calving pattern with minimal inputs. The herd, originally black and white, were crossed with Jersey sires to produce crossbred animals, and in recent years crossbred sires have been used extensively. Herd fertility is excellent with a six week calving rate of 89% and a 25% replacement rate.

This farm visit will provide delegates with a unique insight into a highly profitable grass based system and is a must see for anyone who feels restricted by access to land.

Henry Walsh

Noel O'Toole

Henry Walsh Farms on a 76 ha milking block just outside Oranmore in Co. Galway. The soils are free draining and Henry has developed his system of farming to exploit this advantage fully. The herd has expanded from 160 cows in 2012 to 196 cows last year and 240 cows are being milked in 2015. This rapid expansion has brought challenges in terms of infrastructure and labour but critically it has not impacted on efficiencies with high levels of performance being achieved throughout the expansion process. A lack of winter housing during phases of expansion forced Henry to develop a wintering system that is flexible and cost effective. Unlike the conventional approach of importing winter feed and providing winter accommodation on the home farm, Henry prefers to export the stock instead. Combinations of different out wintering systems with different crops have been used in the past but Henry's preferred system is grazing deferred grass. The outside blocks are cut for silage in mid-August to achieve a clean sward; they are then grazed in rotation by a combination of young stock and dry cows over winter. This system has allowed Henry to expand rapidly while minimising his spending on housing and infrastructure. Milking facilities will, however, become an issue in the near future with the 16 unit parlour coming under pressure with the additional cow numbers.

The herd EBI is €169 with a mixture of Friesian, Jersey and Norwegian Red genetics.
In the mid 2000's the original black and white herd was crossed to Norwegian Red and Jersey sires as part of the Moorepark crossbreeding trial. Henry was extremely happy with the crossbred cows and how they performed in his system. In recent years he has been using Jersey and "black and white" sires to breed three way crossbred cows. The herd performance is impressive, producing430 kg MS/cow from 450 kg of concentrate per cow and the herd has an 85% six week calving rate.

The Walsh farm is an excellent example of how rapid expansion can take place with minimal impact on efficiencies once investments are prioritised clearly and money is invested in areas that will yield a high return. This visit will be of particular interest to those planning large scale expansion in the coming years.

Commenting at the launch of this year's Dairy Summer Tour Eamonn O'Reilly, Agri Advisor, AIB said: "We are delighted to continue our support of the Irish Grassland Association Dairy Summer Tour. This year's event is a further opportunity for farmers to learn first hand from two progressive dairy farmers who have expanded output in recent years. Both farmers adopted differing strategies, but the fundamentals of grass and maintaining efficiencies were key to the successful expansion on both farms."

Early booking for this event is strongly encouraged as places will be limited and this event did sell out early last year. A special discounted registration fee applies to registrations up to and including Friday 17th July of €30 for Irish Grassland Association members and €60 for non-members. You can register and avail of these prepaid discounts on line secretary@irishgrassland.com. Registration will take place at O'Deas hotel in Loughrea, Co. Galway from 8.30 am. Conference Registration fee includes attendance, bus transfers to and from both farms, copy of the papers, breakfast rolls and tea for delegates who arrive before 8.30 am and a packed lunch. Please note that as part of its initiative to attract new members, the conference registration fee for non-members also includes one year's FREE membership to the IGA (for all new d/d memberships). So, if you are a non-member and thinking of attending, then don't miss out on this excellent offer!

#backedbyAIB

New Innovation Centre for Grassland and Dairying Opened

Eric Donald,
Teagasc PR

Over €4.5 million has been invested in a new Innovation Centre for Grassland and Dairying at the Teagasc campus in Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork. The Paddy O'Keeffe Innovation Centre, funded by FBD Trust and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine was officially opened, Friday, 17 April. Present for the opening were EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil Hogan, EU Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos Moedas and Minister for Agriculture, Food, the Marine & Defence, Simon Coveney TD.

The Paddy O'Keeffe Innovation Centre will be used by the researchers, specialists and advisers involved in the delivery of the Teagasc Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Programme, and in the delivery of part of Teagasc Education programme. Specifically, it will support the research programme on grassland, animal breeding and health, and farming systems.

Speaking at the official opening, EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil Hogan said: "The late Paddy O'Keeffe really is one of the legends of Irish agriculture. His passion for innovation, for change, for development, for productivity and ultimately for the sustainability of Irish agriculture and the rural way of life are values more important today than ever before, as we enter a new era of Irish, and indeed European, agriculture."

EU Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos Moedas said: "I am delighted to see this major new investment in the future of farming, food and rural communities. This is a good case where science and research are 'down to earth'. Faced with an emerging risk to our future food security, Europe needs to step up research and innovation across the agri-food chain to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead."

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney TD said: "Paddy O'Keefe was a much admired figure who spent his life seeking out new knowledge that would ultimately help improve the agri-food sector here in Ireland. His commitment to education, research and the dissemination of information to the farming community remained constant over the decades and this Innovation Centre is a truly fitting tribute to his legacy."

Teagasc Chairman, Dr. Noel Cawley thanked FBD Trust for their generous financial support which facilitated the establishment of the Paddy O'Keeffe Innovation Centre. He also acknowledged the funding contribution from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine towards the Centre. "Paddy was a passionate advocate of new knowledge and recognised the need for continuous improvement within the industry and the need to develop Ireland's competitive advantage as grass based milk producers. As we enter this new post quota era in milk production, and as we strive to increase our utilisation of grass in beef and sheep

systems, this new Innovation Centre, the researchers working here and the young people educated here, will play an increasingly important role in developing Irish agriculture in the future."

Michael Berkery, Chairman of FBD, said: "FBD's very substantial financial investment in the Moorepark Research and Innovation Centre is a strong statement of the Company's commitment to Irish farmers and the agricultural industry. He added; "The Teagasc Moorepark research team, led by Dr. Pat Dillon, were greatly admired by the late Paddy O'Keeffe. This talented team and the new facilities co-funded by FBD private funding, have the capacity to elevate Ireland's grass-based dairy industry to compete with the very best in the world." Mr. Berkery went on to say that "This is a unique financial investment by a private company to public research. The new facilities were a fitting tribute to the late Paddy O'Keeffe's fearless leadership and lifelong contribution to transforming Irish agriculture".

Paddy O'Keeffe was instrumental in the establishment of FBD Insurance Company and was its Chairman for over 20 years. His foresight, leadership and lifelong commitment to the advancement of Irish agriculture, through research and education, established the philanthropic ethos of the FBD Trust over 40 years ago. The Trust continues to fund research and education that will benefit Irish farming and promote the sustainable future growth of Irish agriculture. Through the Trust, the FBD Insurance Group continues to this day to reciprocate the customer loyalty of Irish farmers and Ireland's agricultural community to the Company."

The Teagasc Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Programme is funded through the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Dairy Levy and from the EU through Horizon 2020 and its previous Framework programmes.

Paddy O'Keeffe was a founding member of the Irish Grassland Association (1946), President of the Irish Grassland Association in 1967/'68 and received the Associations inaugural Lifetime Merit Award in 2009.

FBD Farm Safety Champions for Change Campaign

With farm deaths doubling in the last year to 30, FBD is now urging farmers nationwide to **stop taking risks** and become a champion for change. FBD is now calling out to all agri organisations and farmers to stand up and become a **Champion for Change**. Due to the fact that 58% of fatal farm accidents happened on dairy farms, FBD initially sought the support of dairy co-operatives to help deliver the message that now is the time to turn things around and stop taking risks.

To help remind people to stop and think before approaching tasks on the farm, FBD developed new **Champions for Change** farm safety packs and signage which have been delivered through key channels around the country. In addition, to help keep farm families safer, FBD has committed to undertaking 30,000 farm visits throughout 2015/2016 to undertake insurance surveys and to help farmers identify areas where safety could be improved.

The unfortunate rise in the number of fatal accident on farms is a significant concern and it is an issue that we need to address now. The pain, human suffering and economic loss that accompanies all serious and fatal accidents is immense and I would like to extend my sympathy to all farm families and communities that have been affected by in this way.

While farmer's attitudes to health and safety are generally very positive, a change in unsafe culture and behaviour is critical if we are to achieve a reduction in farm accidents. Most farmers understand the hazards on their farms and their associated risks, but they often take chances when they are in a hurry, under stress or when there is a financial cost. Recent research has identified that farmers are more likely to take chances if it is seen as a perceived norm within the industry. For example some farmers may operate a tractor with brakes in poor condition as long as the tractor is not used on a public road. Many farmers also allow children under the age of 14 to operate tractors and other hazardous machinery. The acceptability of these unsafe working behaviours is a culture that we must change. "Unsafe working practices are never acceptable"; this is the perceived norm that we need to see in the farming sector. If we can create a positive safety culture on farms, behavioural change and safer farming practices will follow.

Anyone who has ever made and broken a New Year Resolution can appreciate the difficulty of behaviour change. Making a lasting change in behaviour is rarely a simple process, and usually involves a substantial commitment of time, effort and emotion. Many unsafe practices on Irish farms are learned behaviours which have been passed down for generations, but is it fair to pass these on the next generation? With this in mind

it is imperative that we target the farmers of the future as well as the farmers of today. Behavioural change is rarely easy and often requires a gradual progression of small steps toward a larger goal. Changing behaviour is a slow process but it is imperative if progress is to be made.

A combination of cultural based and behaviour based safety approaches works best. Cultural based approaches serve to shape the perceptions held by individuals regarding the importance of safety. It puts a high value on safety. The behaviour based safety approach focuses on the identification and modification of critical safety behaviours, e.g. ensuring the PTO is only operated when it is guarded, ensuring that only safe means of access to areas at heights are used, ensuring tractors are driven in a safe manner, etc.

Farmers also need to look at issues that negatively affect their safety behaviour when working such as distractions, stress and time constraints. Safety must not be left to chance, farmers need to manage health and safety on their farm and effectively plan work activities. This planning must include planned safety maintenance on farm machinery, equipment and facilities.

There are three key steps involved in farming safely.

1. The first step is realizing that an accident can happen on your farm and having a positive attitude towards health and safety.
2. The second step is to carry out a risk assessment. A risk assessment involves identifying every hazard on your farm, the associated risks and appropriate safety control measures.
3. The third and most important step is implementing the safety control measures and ensuring that safe behavioural work practices are carried out at all times.

Stop Taking Risks, Be a Champion for Change

View our new Champions for Change videos at https://www.youtube.com/user/FBDInsuranceOfficial

Grass.....Magic Stuff

Michael Magan,
Dairy Farmer,
Co. Longford

When nature designed a crop/plant to feed the massive herds on the plains, steppes and pampas of the world, the best it could come up with was grass. Grass is the most widely dispersed crop in the world. It could be arguably said to be the most successful; most durable and vital crop in the food chain. So why do we not use it to greater effect?? Why do we take it so much for granted?

Grass has been around for millions of years. Of late (the last hundred years or so), man has been doing some adjustments in plant breeding but this is just tweaking at the edges of success. Some farmers are budgeting and measuring, walking and recording while research is ongoing. This is good work but the dilemma remains, why are we not using this fantastic resource to greater effect? A crop that can be grazed either continuously or rotationally up to ten times in the season and will fully grow again. A crop that can be conserved either dry or wet, that can be used by young and old animals and will fully satisfy the nutritional needs of the user....wow! What a gift!!

Enough of the introduction.....

When I was asked to do a piece by the Irish Grassland Association, I was going to write about grass on our farm, what we do about reseeding and our "PastureBase" figures. I then got thinking about some of the points that I raised in the paragraphs above, how do we as an industry get more into the grass "zone". What prevents greater use of measurement, better use, more reseeding, etc.? Is it how we have sold the message to date? Is it the language that is used? Is it that it sounds too complicated? I don't know the answer to those questions, I have some theories but they may be as useful as a chocolate tea-pot! What I do want to propose is two ways at looking at the problem.

1. A self-assessment tool.

The amount of grass that any farm can grow is based on many factors. On this farm we have a lot of these factors converging to allow us grow high tonnage per hectare. We have a low elevation, 40 m above sea level, mostly a southerly aspect, free draining soils, high organic matter, good pH, P and K on average and an aggressive reseeding programme.

I suggest that the Irish Grassland Association, in conjunction with Teagasc, devise a sheet whereby a farmer can fill in the details I have outlined for this farm and any other details considered

necessary to give a score as to what is possible for his/her particular farm. No two farms are the same so no two targets should be. So that is the first step in "de-mystifying" grass. Find out what your farm-specific target is.

2. The 20 tonne triangle or the change triangle.

Getting a non-grass focused farmer to change is not easy, we invariably are change adverse. If the issue was taken in steps or bite size pieces we may bring more with us. The idea is a bit like the self-assessment tool only that in this case the objective is to rate how prepared you are as much as your farm is and to bring the reluctant on slowly. The idea is to build up over time, maybe in 6 steps, with one taken each year.

Step 1:	Get a soil test on all the paddocks
Step 2:	Start a lime and P & K programme
Step 3:	Map out paddocks and upgrade or develop the grazing area infrastructure, roads, water, drainage, etc.
Step 4:	Re-seed some obvious poor grasses
Step 5:	Walk the farm weekly
Step 6:	Do some measurement, simple format at first and then put figures on it and record them

If these steps were to be incorporated into a triangle diagram each step could be ticked off as each new pre agreed level was reached. The top of the "triangle" is where you have set your target. We have 20 tonnes at the top of our triangle.

This "change triangle" approach may sound too basic to some but all I know is that what we are doing at present is not working in sufficient numbers! We are not selling a great story to enough people.

Hopefully by now most farmers will be up and running and will be "hooked" on the topic. The steps suggested may be taken in a shorter time frame and other steps may indeed be added to the list but what I want to do is to try and get more farmers to view this as important but not so complicated that they don't bother. Yea, I know, it's not the first time I was called crazy!

On the home farm

We intend to re-seed three paddocks this year. It is a costly process but the benefit in early and late growth is worth it. We are now doing paddocks that are less than 10 years sown. We have just put in our first diploid in years. We only sow mono-cultures on the milking platform and so we get a true picture of what each grass has to offer. We have put in Aberchoice and will sow a paddock to Dunluce next week. We are still debating what the third one will be. We aim to re-seed in the middle of the year when the days are longest and when the turnaround from ploughing to eating is shortest. Our shortest to date is 40 days. Most of the milking platform is now sown to mono-cultures and we are happy with most of them.

Grass research is a topic for another day!!!

Control of Liver Fluke

Ríona Sayers
Teagasc, Animal & Grassland Research and Innovation Centre, Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork .

Introduction
Parasitic diseases are known to result in serious economic losses globally, liver fluke playing a major contributory role in Ireland. Liver fluke **(Fasciola hepatica)** are leaflike trematode parasites and clinical signs of an infestation include bottle jaw, oedema, anaemia, diarrhoea, poor coat and poor appetite. A liver fluke infestation may not always be obvious and subclinical effects such as lowered milk production, poor fertility, poor condition and increased susceptibility to other diseases such as salmonellosis and tuberculosis may occur. A significant proportion (→60%) of cattle livers in Irish slaughter plants are condemned due to evidence of liver fluke. The most recent prevalence study in Ireland, conducted in 2014 as part of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) funded **FLUKELESS** project, recorded exposure to liver fluke in greater than 50% of Irish dairy farms. Control of liver fluke, therefore, remains a necessary part of dairy farm management and the following sections provide information on how to choose and decide upon an appropriate fluke control programme.

Control of liver fluke on dairy farms
The liver fluke life cycle involves the cow as a final host and a mud snail as an intermediate host. Disease arises when cattle ingest metacercariae (larval stage of liver fluke on grass) which penetrate the gut wall and enter the liver. Flukes can cause severe liver damage as both immature and mature fluke. It takes 10 to 12 weeks from the time of ingestion to maturation of the flukes. Once mature, adult flukes can lay as many as 20,000 eggs which are distributed onto pasture and the lifecycle continues. Control must centre on breaking this life cycle. Grazing management can prove useful by implementing controls to reduce poaching and restricting cattle access to wetter areas of the farm which may harbour mud snails. This does not provide a totally effective means of control as poached areas around water troughs and field exits can also provide ideal snail habitat. Use of anthelmintics, therefore, currently remains the mainstay of liver fluke control.

Flukicides differ in their ability to kill different stages of liver fluke, some active against both mature and immature fluke, others only effective against mature adult flukes. Dosing strategies differ based on the activity of a particular product, and it is essential for dairy farmers to note that all products legally available for use in dairy cows during lactation (listed in Table 1) are active against ADULT fluke only. A dosing strategy with these products, therefore, requires that at least two doses of a particular product are used, separated by an interval of greater than six weeks to allow for maturation of immature flukes.

Table 1. Flukicidal medicines that CAN be administered during lactation

MEDICINES THAT CAN BE USED WITH STRICT ADHERENCE TO WITHDRAWAL PERIODS (source: www.hpra.ie)	
Name of product	**Active ingredient**
Albex 10%	Albendazole
Albex 2.5%	Albendazole
Endospec 10% SC	Albendazole
Endospec 2.5% SC	Albendazole
Keelogane SC	Albendazole
Osmonds Flexiben 10% SC	Albendazole
Tramazole 10%	Albendazole
Tramazole 2.5%	Albendazole
Valbazen 10%	Albendazole
Zanil	Oxyclozanide

Three further products are available for use during the dry period only i.e. Endofluke 100 mg/m, Fasifree 10% w/v, and Fasinex 240. These products contain triclabendazole, and are therefore active against all stages of liver fluke (early immature, immature, and mature). These products have lengthy withdrawals that must be adhered to (35-45 days depending on the product) and also require a 48-hour milk withdrawal immediately post-calving.

Restrictions also apply to administration of certain flukicides to pregnant heifers destined to produce milk for human consumption. A summary table of allowed and restricted flukicide products in cows and heifers is available at **http://www.hpra.ie/docs/default-source/Safety-Notices/flukicides-doc-updated-2013-11-26.pdf?sfvrsn=0.**

An appropriate dosing strategy for the majority of spring-calving dairy farms is to dose at housing and again before calving if using a product active against mature fluke only i.e. those listed in Table 1. A single dose of a triclabendazole-containing product (Endofluke, Fasifree, Fasinex 240) administered at-housing according to manufacturer's instructions should suffice. Some farms with evidence of very heavy fluke infestations may add a second dose of a product listed in Table 1 prior to calving to deal with any remaining mature flukes present towards the end of the dry period. It is essential that withdrawal periods are strictly adhered to, whether during lactation or during the dry-period. It is especially important to take note of cows that calve down early, particularly those dosed with a triclabendazole-containing product, as the full withdrawal period must be adhered to.

Liver fluke control in Autumn-calving herds is more complex. As these cows are grazing during their dry period, doses may be less effective as the potential for continuing re-infection exists. The housing period remains the most effective period in which to dose autumn cows. Milk with-holding times will therefore, have to be adhered to.

It is important to note that if drug residues are present in the raw milk, these residues will migrate into dairy products, both pasteurised and unpasteurised. It is critical therefore, that only licenced drugs and appropriate withdrawals are used in animals producing milk for human consumption. Irish milk products undergo testing by international purchasers and a certificate of the absence of drug residues in milk must currently accompany many dairy product sale /export arrangements. It is absolutely vital, therefore, that Irish milk is produced free of residues.

Regular consultation with a veterinary surgeon or the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) will provide up-dates on the status of flukicides, and indeed all veterinary medicines, regarding their use in animals producing milk for human consumption.

Detection of liver fluke
In terms of establishing a farm's liver fluke status, bulk milk samples coupled to faecal (dung) sampling prove extremely useful. It is important to check that the bulk milk test being used by the laboratory yields current liver fluke status rather than historical status. A number of laboratories offer testing for bulk milk samples, faecal samples, or both, are listed at **www.animalhealthireland.ie.** Additional testing laboratories may be available through your veterinary surgeon. Bulk milk sampling is best conducted on a quarterly basis over the entire lactation to monitor changing fluke levels; while many farms experience the traditional Autumn/Winter rise in liver fluke levels, many other farms record unacceptably high fluke levels all year round and stricter liver fluke control measures are required.

All dairy farms should conduct a level of liver fluke testing in order to establish the need for dosing in a particular year. It will also provide a basis for designing the most appropriate dosing strategy in consultation with your veterinary surgeon.

Animal Health Ireland Information Leaflets
A detailed document on liver fluke is available at **www.animalhealthireland.ie** and should be consulted regularly to access the most current information regarding these parasites and their control.

The use of Faecal Egg Counts (FEC) and Interpreting the STAP Faecal test as an aid for worm control in lambs

Frank Hynes
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Animal & Grassland Research
and Innovation Centre, Mellows
Campus, Athenry, Co. Galway

Over the past two years, large numbers of farmers participating in the Sheep Technology Adoption Programme (STAP) have carried out faecal egg counts as one of their tasks under the STAP programme. Whether involved in STAP or not, faecal egg counts are useful in developing a strategic approach to dealing with the major problem of anthelmintic resistance. It is important that farmers adopt the correct approach when taking these samples. It is equally important to understand how to interpret the results received back from the laboratories.

Anthelmintic resistance (AR) is one of the biggest challenges to the future health and profitability of the sheep industry. Task 3 of STAP aims at helping farmers come to terms with the problem of anthelmintic resistance at farm level. Whether participating in STAP or not, faecal egg counts (FEC) are very useful in preparing a dosing programme on every farm.

The objective of task 3 of STAP is to carry out a faecal test to help to establish if there is a level of parasite resistance to the commonly used anthelmintics (i.e. White drench; Benzimidazole (1-Bz), Yellow drench; Levamisole (2-LV) and clear drench / injection; Macro cyclic Lactone (3-ML) (including Ivermectin).

This test must be carried out between **30th May and 19th September 2015**, in accordance with the terms & conditions of STAP. It involves:

- Taking a faecal sample sometime after 30th May and having a FEC carried out by an approved laboratory
- Dosing with an anthelmintic from one of the three groups described above immediately after taking the sample
- Repeating the FEC either 7 days post dosing if a Levamisole (2-LV) product was used or 14 days post treatment if Benzimidazole (1-Bz) or Macro cyclic Lactone (3-ML) products were used.

This test gauges the efficacy of the anthelmintic used. In reality it gives an indication of the anthelmintic inefficiency. It does not necessarily indicate anthelmintic resistance or otherwise as other factors influence the test result (see notes below).

Taking the STAP Faecal Test

There are two stages involved in carrying out this test. Stage 1 involves taking faecal samples prior to dosing lambs. This is followed by a sample taken 7 or 14 days after dosing to check if the treatment worked. The procedure for taking stage 1 and stage 2 samples are described below.

Stage 1 – Collection of pre-anthelmintic faecal samples followed immediately by treatment with anthelmintic:

Follow these 6 steps:

1. Farmer must contact laboratory to request sample containers, allowing time to arrive by post before sampling
   - The list of approved laboratories is available on DAFM website or from your adviser
   - Decide on the product you intend to use and ensure you have it available. Do not use a dual active wormer with ingredients from more than one of these groups. Do not use a new generation wormer (e.g. Zolvix or Startect).
   - Check the expiry date of the product
   - Check that the dosing gun is working properly
2. Randomly select 15 lambs and place in a clean pen
   - Lambs should not have been dosed for at least 6 weeks prior to sampling
   - Leave them a short time to defecate (to pass faeces)

3. Using gloves collect fresh faecal samples from at least 10 separate fresh faecal deposits and place them in 10 separate containers
   - Take samples as soon as possible after gathering.
   - Make sure to collect more than a 'teaspoonful' of faeces, but do not overfill the containers
4. Lambs must be treated with anthelmintic on the same day as the stage 1 faecal samples are collected
   - Treat the 15 lambs with an anthelmintic from one of the following; White (Benzimidazole (1-Bz)), Yellow (Levamisole (2-LV)) or Clear (Macrocyclic Lactone (3-ML)).
   - Follow manufacturer's instructions. Ensure that the dose is administered correctly. Ensure the lamb swallows the entire dose. Dose all lambs at rates according to the weight of the heaviest lamb in the group.
   - Identify the lambs by marking them allowing the same lambs to be identified 1 to 2 weeks later.
5. Complete form STAP 3A, recording the name and the anthelmintic class that was used.
6. Place all filled containers of faeces, plus the complete form in the plastic zip lock bag provided. Post samples preferably on the day of sampling
   - Take samples early in the week to avoid having samples in the post over the week end. Place in a fridge if being kept overnight.

Stage 2 – Re-sampling of lambs

1. 7 to 14 days after the initial test and dose, depending on the anthelmintic product used (see below) gather the lambs again for faecal sampling.
   - Anthelmintic groups Timing of 2nd sampling
   - i. White Benz imidazole (1-Bz) - 14 days post treatment
   - ii. Yellow Levamisole (2-LV) - 7 days post treatment
   - iii. Clear Macrocyclic Lactone (3-ML) 14 days post treatment
2. Separate out the same 15 lambs that were sampled, dosed and marked in Stage 1. Place these lambs in a clean pen and allow them a short time to defecate. Collect faecal samples as described at 3 above, and post samples to laboratory according to steps 5 & 6 above.

The results will be reported to you and to DAFM after all procedures are complete (i.e. both Stage 1&2 completed).

Interpreting Test 1

For the purposes of Task 3 under STAP, most of the approved laboratories report on the level of eggs present in faecal samples for the following:

1. **Strongyle** worms which include mainly Trichostrongylus, Cooperia and **Teladorsagia spp.**
2. **Nematodirus spp.**
3. **Coccidial oocysts**

While Cooperia included at 1 above is not particularly pathogenic and in general is of little concern, their eggs are similar to the other strongyle eggs and it will contribute to the FEC.

Strongyle species

Having taken sample 1 of the STAP Faecal test, lambs will have been dosed after sampling and before receiving the test result. The main worms of concern for lambs from 1st June onwards are the Strongyle worm species. The message to be taken concerning Strongyles from this 1st test is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. The message to be taken from Faecal Egg Count for strongyle species (Dose administered immediately after taking FEC)

Faecal egg count (EPG)	Interpretation
Count → 500	The dose given was justified and lambs should benefit from a reduction in worm burden
Count ← 500	Dose was not necessary and will be of little benefit. (A similar result in future, if taken before dosing, will indicate that dosing is not necessary and a re-test should be considered in the weeks ahead as counts may increase as the season progresses.)

Nematodirus spp.

Assuming that by mid to late June, lambs will be greater than 10 weeks old, a high egg count for Nematodirus is probably of little significance because:

- Lambs tend to become resistant to Nematodirus from 10 to 12 weeks of age
- Egg production tends to be high when number of larvae in the gut are low
- There are several species of Nematodirus with Nematodirus battus being the only pathogenic species for lambs. The worm eggs identified in the egg count may also include non pathogenic species.

However, if lambs show signs of black scour, straining, dehydration, generally being unwell, Nematodirus could be causing the problem and a dose may be justified. Furthermore, a dose may be considered to reduce the worm egg burden being passed onto the pasture for next year.

Coccidia

Where the level of coccidian oocysts are high, there may or may not be a problem.

- Lambs tend to be infected with small numbers of coccidian parasites and develop immunity to these parasites from about 8 weeks of age onwards. However, the immunity will not develop if the lambs do not have some exposure to coccidia. Furthermore, husbandry and management may lead to high challenge and even immune animals may develop clinical symptoms.
- As with Nematodirus, there are several species of coccidia that are non-pathogenic and these may give rise to the high oocyst count in the test.
- On the other hand the coccidia present may in fact be pathogenic. Therefore, if there is an unexplained scouring or lack of thrive, the results should be discussed with a veterinary surgeon as coccidia may well cause a problem.

Interpreting Test 2

The purpose of taking the 2nd test is to determine the efficacy of the anthelmintic used following taking the initial test. Therefore, the result of this test must be examined in conjunction with the 1st test. The proportional reduction in egg count is important. While dosing is generally not recommended at counts of less than 500 strongyle eggs per gram, the proportional reduction in egg numbers can be calculated at much lower counts.

This is calculated as follows:
((egg count test 1) – (egg count test 2)) × 100
egg count test 1

- If the result is →95% it is considered there is no problem with the anthelmintic
- If the result is ←95% it is considered there is a problem and anthelmintic resistance is likely if dosing guidelines were adhered to correctly.

Decisions based on FEC result

Whether participating in STAP or not, faecal egg counts are very useful and can provide valuable information. They can be used to:

- Help determine whether animals need to be treated or not
- Help time treatments better
- Test the efficacy of the treatment
- Reduce the number of treatments where anthelmintics are used excessively
- Obtain information on the level of contamination going onto pasture

Table 2 provides a guide to interpreting low, medium and high faecal egg counts in lambs in terms of eggs per gram for the main pathogenic roundworm species in Ireland. When Strongyle worm egg counts are in the medium to high category in lambs during the early summer months, a dose is usually justified.

Table 2. Guide to interpreting Faecal Egg Counts in lambs (epg)

Worm Species	Faecal Egg Counts (FEC)		
	Low	Medium	High
Trichostrongylus spp	100 - 500	500 - 1500	→ 1500
Teladorsagia circumcincta	50 - 250	250 - 1000	→ 1000
Nematodirus battus	50 - 150	150 – 300	→ 300

(Taylor, 2011)

SCOPS (Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep) is an industry led group in the UK that represents the interests of the sheep industry. This group have produced a technical manual with advice which is just as relevant for farmers in Ireland as in the UK. The full manual is well worth a read and can be accessed on the following website:
http://www.scops.org.uk/content/SCOPS-Technical-manual-4th-Edition-June-2012.pdf

Conclusion

Anthelmintic resistance poses a major threat to the health and profitability of the sheep industry. Task 3 of the Sheep Technology Adoption Programme is designed to help farmers deal effectively with the problem and establish if resistance is a problem on participant's farms. Whether participating in STAP or not faecal egg counts are very useful in helping establish if anthelmintic resistance is a problem on your farm. The results of such tests must be interpreted correctly so that the benefits can be maximised.

Market requirements for Quality Assurance & Sustainability

Padraig Brennan,
Sustainability Development Manager, Bord Bia

Background
As an export orientated food and drink sector that sees more than 85% of our beef and dairy output exported annually, it is vital that Ireland has a strong reputation internationally as a supplier of safe, high quality and responsibly produced products. It helps secure the list of customers across key markets to deliver on the growth targets outlined for the livestock and dairy sectors in Food Harvest 2020.

Key to securing and maintaining this reputation in the marketplace is the ability to demonstrate the systems in place that ensure the production of quality products. This has led to the growing importance of having a Quality Assurance system in place that can satisfy the requirements of key customers across Europe and further afield.

Importance of Quality Assurance
Bord Bia has had Quality Assurance Schemes in place for over 25 years. Over that period the schemes have undergone significant developments to ensure they remain relevant to the needs of the marketplace and are operated in a way that reflects farming in Ireland.

A core element of the schemes is that farm audits are undertaken by independent audit bodies and are accredited to either EN45011 or ISO17065, which ensures they have strong marketplace credibility.

Some of the key focus points of customers in relation to quality assurance include traceability, animal health & welfare, remedies, biosecurity and feeds with an overarching goal of ensuring high levels of food safety at all times. This type of assurance is a prerequisite for supplying retail and foodservice customers across Europe and further afield.

Irish beef is currently stocked by more than 80 retail and foodservice groups across Europe, which means Irish beef is stocked by more retail groups than beef of any other origin across Europe. Such access would not be possible without the Quality Assurance Schemes in place.

The scope of what customers are looking for continues to evolve and over recent years Bord Bia has witnessed an ever increasing focus on sustainability issues among leading retailers and food manufacturers. Increasingly customers are looking to suppliers to demonstrate their sustainability credentials and how they are monitoring and improving performance over time.

Recognising this development and given the sustainability credentials of how we produce food in Ireland, Bord Bia launched the Origin Green programme in June 2012. Origin Green is a first national sustainability programme for the food sector globally and offers an independently verified structure for Irish farmers and food manufacturers to demonstrate their sustainability performance.

At farm level Origin Green has involved the extension of the range of criteria examined as part of the Quality Assurance audit to incorporate greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity, water and energy. Farmers that are certified members of Bord Bia's Beef & Lamb Quality Assurance Scheme (BLQAS) become part of Origin Green once they undertake a sustainability assessment.

Quality Assurance at farm level
Every farm that is part of Bord Bia's Quality & Sustainability programmes is assessed on an 18 month audit cycle. As part of this assessment all records in relation animal movements, remedy purchase and usage, feed and other inputs are assessed. In addition, the health & welfare of animals and biosecurity measures are monitored.

All information is captured on a handheld device and is loaded into Bord Bia's Quality Assurance database. Farmers are provided with an exit card by the auditors, which summarises the farms performance and outlines any issues requiring attention or offering potential for improvement. On average BLQAS audits take around 1 hour 40 minutes to complete.

Currently there are more than 45,000 cattle farms that are part of the BLQAS. Members account for over 90% of the beef produced in Ireland. In addition more than 10,000 dairy farms have applied to join the Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme.

Information captured is reviewed prior to going forward to a certification committee for a final decision on the certification status of the enterprise. The scheme certification for each farm is valid for a period of 18 months.

Assessing sustainability performance
Demonstrating the sustainability credentials of Irish livestock production is a key element of the Origin Green programme. The rollout of Origin Green at farm level has seen Bord Bia undertake more than 80,000 sustainability assessments on beef and dairy farms since 2011. This information is collected at the same time as the QA farm audit.

There are a number of elements to sustainability information collected on farm. This includes:

COLLECTED ON FARM

During the farm assessment, the information collected focuses on the other areas that affect most of the carbon footprint of a farm. These include grazing season length, manure management, animal diets, and fertilizer use.

ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION MOVEMENT (AIM)

With the permission of participating farmers, the AIM database, which is managed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, provides a full profile of each animal in each herd. It provides full details of births, deaths, sales, and purchases and outlines the length of time each animal is on the farm.

IRISH CATTLE BREDING FEDERATION

The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation supplies detailed production-related data for each farm. This information ranges from calving dates and calving interval to replacement rates and daily liveweight gain.

All the information collected directly from the farmer and national databases is combined to provide an indicative performance for the farm. This is compiled into a feedback report, which is sent to each farmer.

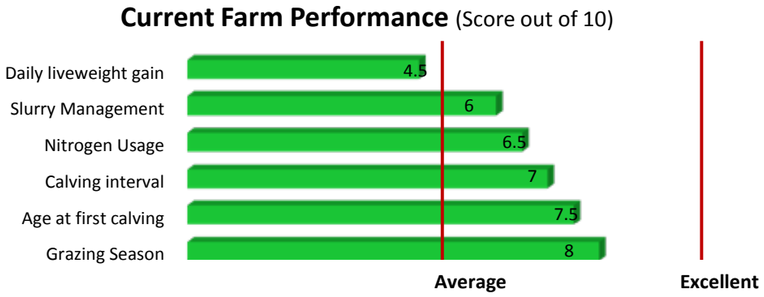
The feedback letter gives the farmer an indication of their current carbon footprint and how it compares to similar farms in a similar production system. It also focuses on some of the key management areas that influence farm performance. Typically these are areas that can optimise a farms environmental and economic performance.

Sustainability information collection

A key criteria for Bord Bia from the outset was the need for any farm assessments to be credible. Working closely with Teagasc and The Carbon Trust, Bord Bia has developed Carbon Trust accredited carbon footprint models for beef and dairy over recent years. These form the basis of the feedback report sent to each farmer.

Once the farmer has received their feedback report, the next step is to provide farmers with advice and how they can deliver further improvement. This led to Bord Bia and Teagasc working together to develop Carbon Navigator tools. By working with their advisors, farmers can set targets for improvement in practical management areas and see the potential impact of achieving them on their farm's footprint and financial performance. These tools are also made available through the Teagasc discussion group network.

The core message of the feedback and advice programme is that sustainable and efficient production go hand in hand.



Increasing your farm performance by 10% could boost your farms financial performance by €3,500 and reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from your beef enterprise by 5%.

Sample of feedback provided to beef farmers

The range of measures incorporated as part of the sustainability assessment on beef farms has been extended to include water and biodiversity measures, which are in addition to existing animal health/welfare, traceability and soil management.

The importance of Quality Assurance and Sustainability programmes has never been greater in the marketplace in driving the reputation of Irish food and drink products and helping to build a preference with key customers over time.

Teagasc Green Acres Calf to Beef Programme

Rosalyn Drew,
Drummonds Ltd. and
Irish Grassland Association
Council Member

The Teagasc Green Acres Calf to Beef Programme is a new Teagasc joint programme supported by industry partners, Liffey Mills, Drummonds Ltd., Volac Ireland, MSD Animal Health, Grassland Agro and media partner The Farming Independent. The programme will be overseen by the programme adviser Gordon Peppard on a full time basis for a period of three years.

Gordon Peppard

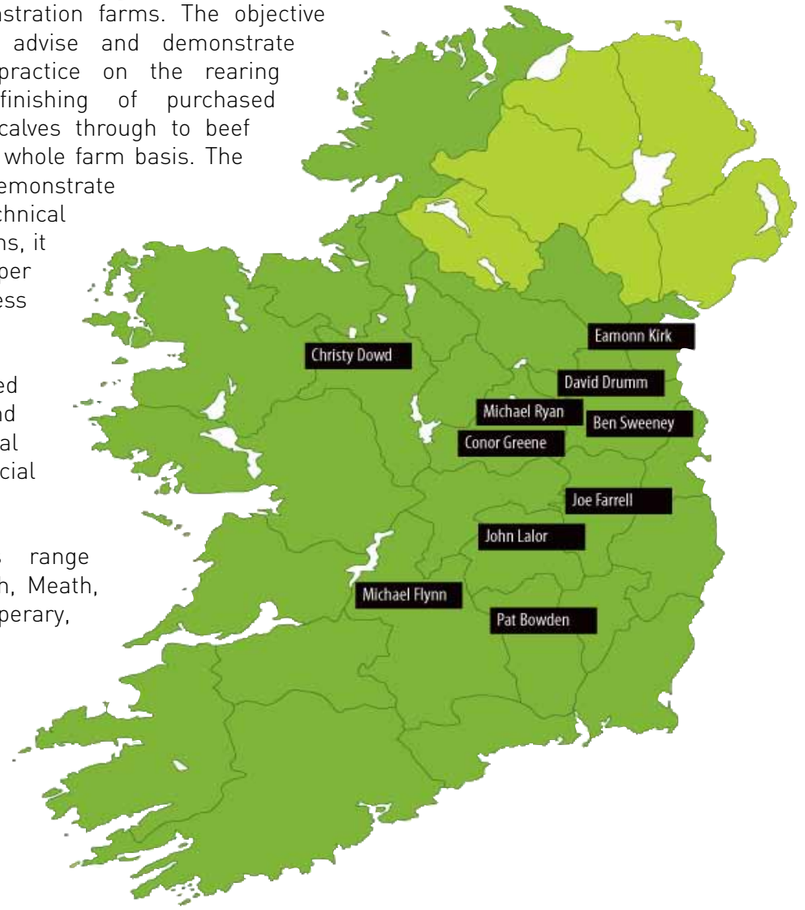
With the expansion of the national dairy herd due to the abolition of milk quotas in 2015, there will be an increase in the production of dairy bred calves; this will result in more dairy bred calves that will be finished as beef.

Significant research information has been generated on dairy beef finishing at Teagasc centres at Grange and Johnstown Castle. However, there is limited data on whole farm dairy calf to beef systems, demonstrating best practice at farm level.

This Teagasc Green Acres Calf to Beef programme aims to demonstrate profitable dairy calf to beef systems on a whole farm basis through a network of ten demonstration farms. The objective is to advise and demonstrate best practice on the rearing and finishing of purchased dairy calves through to beef as steers, heifers and bulls on a whole farm basis. The primary aim of the project is to demonstrate that, where a high level of technical efficiency is achieved on beef farms, it is possible to attain a net margin per hectare (excluding premia) in excess of €500 per hectare.

The programme will be based around six key pillars, Grassland management, Calf rearing, Animal health, Soil fertility, Financial management and Farm planning.

The 10 participating farmers range across 8 different counties, Louth, Meath, Westmeath, Roscommon, Tipperary, Laois, Kildare and Kilkenny.



The farmers are:

Farmer Profile: Christy Dowd

Castlerea, Co. Roscommon

Christy is farming 43 ha and is carrying 43 cows on a suckling to weanling enterprise using all AI bulls. He is an ex-dairy farmer and this can be clearly seen in his attitude to grassland management. Christy realises that he needs to increase his stocking rate on the farm, so he has decided to rear 60 calves this spring as the cheapest form of getting into more stock. He has bought Angus and Hereford heifer with the view of finishing them before the second winter. He is diversifying to increase output on his farm and this should be of great interest to many other suckler farmers who wish to continue suckling but may also wish to rear some calves for the first time

Farmer Profile: Eamon Kirk

Dundalk, Co. Louth

Eamon is farming 25 ha of grassland and also has tillage on the farm. He previously finished his continental bulls at 24 months of age. He decided to move away from this system in 2014 and now plans to slaughter steers at 24-26 months of age. He has reared Angus calves in the past and last year he slaughtered bullocks off grass in June at 26 months of age. Eamon intends to rear more calves in 2015 so he will not have to purchase any weanlings or stores in autumn 2015. One option for Eamon in the Teagasc Green Acres Calf to Beef Programme is to slaughter all steers at 24-26 months in April-June at a higher beef price. Another option is to finish his Angus steers at lighter carcass weights off grass at the end of the second grazing season. This would allow for an increase in stocking rate on the farm

Farmer Profile: David Drum

Athboy, Co. Meath

David currently has a cattle and tillage enterprise on his farm. He runs a herd of 70 suckler cows and brings all the progeny to beef. There are presently 90 ha in grassland. He previously bought continental weanlings in autumn and finished them as bulls at 20-22 months of age. Last year he reared 100 calves in spring 2014 and also bought more Friesian weanlings in autumn as opposed to buying continental weanlings. David's plan in the Teagasc Green Acres Calf to Beef Programme will be to slaughter bulls at 18 months as there will be no facilities to house bulls for a second winter. Grassland management will be the key management tool for David in this programme. He has got very good housing facilities for weanlings and calf rearing and all his land is reseeded due to crop rotations.

Farmer Profile: Ben Sweeney

Enfield, Co. Meath

Ben is farming 110 ha of grassland and also grows maize and barley on his farm. He currently rears approximately 140 calves each year. He buys Friesians bull calves and Angus heifers and everything is brought to slaughter. The bulls are finished between 18 to 20 months and the heifers are finished at 20 months. He has a Volac computerised calf feeder on the farm for the rearing of around 60 calves in a group, so each year he will rear 120 spring born calves with the feeder and 20 on the bucket system. Ben has 20 sucklers on the farm running with an Angus bull and these progeny are also brought to finish on the farm. One of Ben's main objectives in the Teagasc Green Acres Calf to Beef Programme will be to put on as many kilos of live weight as possible from grass.

Farmer Profile: Michael Ryan

Mullingar, Co. Westmeath

Michael is currently farming 40 ha of good quality land. He began rearing calves on his farm 5 years ago and last year he bucket fed 91 Angus and Hereford heifers. He works full time and needs a system in place that is straight forward and profitable. He plans to slaughter heifers off grass at 19-20 months in the autumn. This means they will not go back into the shed for a second winter thus reducing costs. This will be a challenge but through reseeding, setting up a new paddock system to better utilise grass this can be achieved. When the new paddocks are in place and reseeding is complete Michael hopes to increase stocking rate which will increase output. Michael aims to get a simple system in place that works for him in order to give him time with his young family.

Farmer Profile: Conor Greene

Mullingar, Co. Westmeath

Conor is farming 70 ha in Rathaspic, Co. Westmeath. He buys Friesian bull calves and slaughters them as steers at 30 months off grass with a small amount of concentrate. He reared 80 calves in 2014 and has vast experience of calf rearing. Through targeting more forward stock and getting them out to grass earlier Conor may get some bullocks away to the factory at 26 months in June at a higher beef price. Grassland management is high on his priority list as well as continuing the reseeding programme. He has a computerised calf feeder which can feed 60 calves in a group. He will increase output on the farm by increasing the number of batches of calves reared and make more use of the computerised feeder. This will increase stocking rate and while reducing the variable costs will put more money in his pocket.

Farmer Profile: Joe Farrell

Castledermot, Co. Kildare

Joe is farming 30 ha of grassland and also has a tillage enterprise on the farm. He rears 80 Angus heifers each year and slaughters them out of the shed at 20-22 months. His heifers go to grass in early spring so they can gain as much weight from grass as possible. Joe has also a tillage enterprise on the farm and he grows his own grain and maize for finishing. The plan for Joe in this Programme is increase his output even further, by the development of a paddock grazing system, he can then measure grass and increase grass utilisation, and thereby increasing stocking rate. He intends to increase output but keep the variable costs static so as to put more money in his pocket.

Farmer Profile: John Lalor

Ballyfin, Co. Laois

John and his sons Matthew and John Clyde are farming 41 ha of grass and 48 ha of tillage at present. They run 100 Angus/Hereford heifers only and finish them out of the shed at 22 months of age. John was in suckling but decided a few years ago to get out of cows and concentrate solely on a calf to beef enterprise. He has become very professional at rearing calves and has a very cheap system of wintering his weanling calves. They are fed silage and meal in a straw bedded shed but have access at all times to stubble ground outside. These cattle are very fit and healthy and will be ready to put on weight as soon as they start grazing grass.

Farmer Profile: Pat Bowden

Lisdowney, Co. Kilkenny

Pat farms 107 ha of grass, where the land type is heavy for this part of the country. He is running 40 suckler cows and sells some of these as stores at 18 months and slaughters more of them as bullocks and heifers at 24 months. There has always been a tradition of rearing calves on this farm and last year he reared 70 Friesian bullocks. Pat has been reclaiming, fencing and reseeding land over the last few years and as result of this he is not highly stocked. There are many options available to Pat, from finishing bullocks out of shed at 24 months to finishing off grass at 26-30 months. The key tools for Pat going forward will be reseeding and using a paddock system. There is huge scope for Pat to increase output and profit on this farm.

Farmer Profile: Michael Flynn

Nenagh, Co. Tipperary

Michael was previously running 55 autumn calving suckler cows on his farm outside of Nenagh but cut this back to 27 cows in 2014, in order to expand his calf to beef enterprise. He slaughters his autumn born bulls at 16-17 months old and heifers at 18-20 months. Michael and his wife Kathleen first reared 20 Hereford calves a few years ago and got on very well when they slaughtered them. This gave them great confidence that they could make this work on their farm. As a result of this they reared 80 calves last year. These will be slaughtered at 20 months of age at the end of the second grazing season. Their previous experience of this has been very successful with them reaching good carcass weights for bullocks at 20 months. The weight for age is excellent and proves that Michael is a very good grassland manager.

Dates for your Diary 2015

Tuesday 30th June
Irish Grassland Association
Beef Conference and Farm Walk
Longford
Registration is essential
www.irishgrassland.com

Tuesday 28th July
Irish Grassland Association
Dairy Summer Tour
Galway
Registration is essential
www.irishgrassland.com

Wednesday 8th July
Ulster Grassland Society
Beef and Sheep Farm Walk
Fermanagh
Registration is essential
www.ulstergrassland.co.uk

Thursday 17th September
Irish Grassland Association
AGM
Laois
Registration is essential
www.irishgrassland.coma

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