

# Irish Grassland Association

Members' Information Booklet

Winter Edition Issue No. 40

**“To advance the knowledge of good grassland management in Irish farming”**

**Special focus on Fodder Budgeting and Herd Health**







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# Contents

## Editorial

### SECTION 1 – EVENTS

IGA Annual General Meeting Report	6
Lifetime Merit Award Review	10
Dairy Summer Tour Review	14
Student Conference Review	16
Dairy Conference & Networking Evening Preview 2019	19

### SECTION 2 – FARMER FOCUS

Managing the winter fodder deficit – A Dairy Perspective	22
Planning for the autumn/winter ahead - A Sheep Perspective	24
Stretching Winter Fodder – A Beef Perspective	26
A Year in my Wellies (Dairy) – Lauren Baker	29
A Year in my Wellies (Drystock) – Stephen Coen	30

### SECTION 3 – TECHNICAL FOCUS ON HERD HEALTH & GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT

Feeding the Dry Cow	32
Soil Testing: Get sampling for 2019	34

### SECTION 4 – FARM SAFETY

Positive Mental Health in Farming	36
Charity feature: EMBRACE Farm	38
Dates for your Diary	40

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## Irish Grassland Association Editorial



Rosalyn Drew  
IGA Honorary Editor  
and Nitrofert Ltd.

### Dear Member,

It is hard to believe that this is the last issue of the IGA newsletter for 2018 – where has that year gone? Looking back on possibly one of the most difficult years for Irish grassland farmers I am sure all concerned will be considering on how they will prepare for 2019 and beyond. There are likely to be many changes in farm plans and strategy going into the New Year! With this in mind, the focus in this issue is primarily on fodder budgeting and herd health over the coming months.

In the Opinion piece section, we have valuable advice across each sector from Philip Creighton, Aidan Murray, PJ O’Keeffe and Martin Ryan on how to best manage a fodder deficit according to your farm system. In addition to this advice Professor Finbar Mulligan from UCD has also written an excellent technical article on how good dry cow nutrition can prevent many herd health problems occurring which in the long run can save farmers money.

As most farmers will be bringing in livestock now and closing up paddocks it is timely to conduct a soil test on your farm. Good grassland management starts with the soil and as farmers are keepers of the soil it is in their interest to maintain soil fertility to get the best return from their grass. Dr Stan Lalor has outlined in his article the benefits of soil testing and the importance of timing and quality of sampling in helping to formulate a nutrient management plan for 2019.

On page 6 we have a full report of the Irish Grassland Association AGM held in September where we

welcomed our new president Ciaran Lynch to the role taking over the mantle from Jan Jensma. We also welcomed a number of new council members while thanking all our retiring members for their huge contribution to IGA events over the years. Matt O’Keeffe and Noel Culleton have written a great tribute to the recent Lifetime Merit Award recipient Matt Ryan for his outstanding contribution to Irish grassland farming. You can read all about Matts’ devotion and passion to driving grass production towards the profitability of dairy farming in Ireland on page 10.

In our regular section on IGA Events, we have reviews on both the student conference and dairy summer tour. We also have a preview by George Ramsbottom on the ever popular Dairy Conference and Networking event being held once again in Charleville on the 8th and 9th January. This ever popular event always features high on the dairy sector calendar and promises to be a most informative day with an excellent line up to include Dr. John Roche from New Zealand. Dr. Roche is the Chief Science Advisor for New Zealand’s Ministry for Primary Industries and is also MD of an advisory service. The theme of this year’s conference is ‘Balancing inputs and profit in grass based dairying’ so should provide plenty of information and debate for those attending!

Our Health and Safety section features articles focussing on Mental Health and the impact farm accidents have on families. Going into the winter after a long and difficult year with relentless challenges and an ever increasing workload many farmers may be feeling overwhelmed or stressed out. Hopefully both of these articles will provide help and benefit to those who read them. Raising awareness of the impact that stress has on farmers and the wonderful work that charities such as Embrace FARM do is vital and may even save someones life.

Finally, on behalf of myself and my wonderful sub-committee I wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year. As outlined in our notice below, we welcome any suggestions you may have for our forthcoming issues of the newsletter.

### SUGGESTIONS & FEEDBACK PLEASE!

If you have any suggestions for the newsletter or any particular topics or features you would like us to include in our forthcoming issues of the newsletter please send via email to [secretary@irishgrassland.com](mailto:secretary@irishgrassland.com) We would love to hear from you!





## IGA AGM 2018

**Maura Callery,**  
Irish Grassland Association  
Office Manager.



The AGM of the Irish Grassland Association (IGA) took place in the Horse and Jockey Hotel. A roundup of the year's activities was presented by the outgoing President Jan Jensma (Yara). The IGA welcomed the new incoming President Ciaran Lynch from Cavan (Sheep Specialist with Teagasc) into office. Paul Hyland, Dairy Farmer from Laois was announced as the new IGA Vice President.



The President and council thanked the outgoing council members Michael Bateman Dairy farmer from Cork, Brian Nicholson Sheep Farmer from Kilkenny, Mark Maxwell Beef Farmer from Westmeath and Austin Flavin of Teagasc on their contributions. This current term with strong leadership from the outgoing President Jan Jensma and tremendous teamwork from the IGA Council, led to a hugely successful year for the Irish Grassland Association.

The Irish Grassland Association (IGA) is one of Irish Agriculture's great national resources. Since its foundation in 1946 the IGA has played a unique and central role in the development of profitable systems of milk, beef and lamb production from Ireland's abundant grasslands. The essential component of this objective is the stimulation and development of new ideas, research and new farm practices with associated financial analyses. The Irish Grassland Association is also a non-profit making organisation and is Ireland's leading forum for discussing the science and economics of dairy, beef and sheep production systems and for communicating this information to farmers. Currently membership consists of some of the most progressive dairy, beef and sheep producers, agricultural scientists, consultants and agri-business personnel.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the President and Council to thank everyone involved in running our events, our host families and our sponsors. We would also like to thank you, our loyal farming and corporate members for coming to these events in such overwhelming numbers. We look forward to meeting you all very soon again at the free members evening on the 8th January and the Dairy Conference on the 9th January (both in the Charleville Park Hotel).

## Newly elected members

Each year a number of seats on our council can become available to be filled through election on foot of existing council members' terms expiring. Ciaran Lynch welcomed new council members Eddie Gavin, Sheep Farmer from Carlow, Bryan Hynes, Dairy Farmer from Galway, Stuart Childs, Teagasc Dairy Specialist and Thomas O'Connor, Beef Farmer from Kildare.



**Bryan Hynes**  
IGA Council Member  
and Dairy Farmer

Bryan is a dairy farmer from Clarinbridge, Co Galway. Following completion of an arts degree in NUI Galway, Bryan worked as a news reporter for the Irish Farmers Journal. During this time, he was farming sucklers with his father in Galway. In 2013 he commenced a farm partnership with his next door neighbour who was milking cows. In 2017 Bryan received a Nuffield Scholarship and began studying 'the management structures of multiple units'. The same year he leased a farm in north Clare and commenced milking there in 2018. Today the partnership is milking 300 cows and will host this year's Irish Grasslands Association student conference. Bryan is a past chairman of Macra na Feirme's agricultural affairs committee and is an active member of the Galway Grazers discussion group. He has a keen interest in pasture based agriculture.



**Eddie Gavin**  
IGA Council Member  
and Sheep and Beef  
Farmer

Eddie Gavin is a Drystock and Tillage farmer farming 200 acres in Carlow. He also share farms 40 acres (25 tillage and 15 grass). Eddie keeps 320 ewes, mainly Suffolk cross and recently introduced Belclare. He also keeps Charolais rams. Eddie rears 30 dairy bred calves each year and this year he kept them as bulls. Eddie also runs a contracting enterprise mainly hedge cutting. Eddie's future plans are to reduce tillage to 60 acres and increase ewe and cattle numbers with the view to phasing out the contract work to just hedge cutting. Eddie started paddock grazing sheep this year and has a very good interest in growing more grass and increasing his knowledge of grass production.



**Stuart Childs**  
IGA Council Member  
and Teagasc Dairy  
Specialist

Stuart is from Mitchelstown in Co. Cork. Having qualified from UCD with a BAgSc (Animal Science), he completed a PhD in Animal Science with Teagasc and UCD investigating the role of fatty acid nutrition on fertility in cattle under the direction of Professors David Kenny, Joe Sreenan and Michael Diskin graduating in 2008. Following nine months in the Animal Biotech Department in Teagasc Moorepark working on immune response to mastitis infection, Stuart worked for 10 years as a Dairy Advisor in East Limerick based in Kilmallock and subsequently in the Mallow and Moorepark areas. He has recently taken on the role of dairy specialist for the South Western region continuing to be based in Moorepark. Stuart is very interested in maximising milk production performance through maximum use of grass, the role of technology in improving all levels of farm management and the potential of these areas to drive social, environmental and financial sustainability at farm level. Stuart also runs a dairy farm along with his father William just outside Mitchelstown supplying nearby Dairygold Co-op.



**Thomas O'Connor**  
IGA Council Member  
and Beef Farmer

Thomas O'Connor runs a family farm near the village of Moone in South Kildare. The farm is run as a partnership between Thomas and his parents Monica and Tom. This is a truly mixed farm with four enterprises on the farm comprising Beef, Sheep, Tillage and Pigs. In 2015 Thomas was the winner of the FBD Young Beef Farmer of the year competition. Grassland management is excellent with all the farm laid out in 2 ha paddocks, with the provision for subdivision of all paddocks. The three pillars supporting excellent output are to be seen on this farm namely, Breeding, Grassland Management, Livestock Management. Thomas is achieving an annual stocking rate of 3.3 livestock units per ha and a beef output of 1,498 live weight per hectare, grass utilised in 2017 was 11.5 tonnes of dry matter per hectare.





Ciaran Lynch  
President 2018-19  
and Teagasc



Paul Hyland  
Vice President 2018-19  
and Dairy Farmer



Jan Jensma  
Past President 2017-18  
YARA



Bernard Ging  
Past President 2016-17  
Dairy Farmer



Maura Callery  
Office Manager

### Ciaran Lynch IGA President 2018-19

Ciaran works with Teagasc as a Sheep Specialist, In the role he works with advisory and research teams to address the issues in the sector and improve Knowledge exchange at farm level. Previous to this he worked as a Research Technologist coordinating the Teagasc BETTER Farm Sheep Programme. Coming from a beef and sheep farm in Co. Cavan he graduated from UCD with a degree in Animal science.



Alan Kelly  
IGA Council Member  
and UCD



Adam Woods  
IGA Council Member and  
Irish Farmers Journal



Cathal McCormack  
IGA Council Member  
and Alltech



Christy Watson  
IGA Council Member  
and Teagasc



Eddie Connell  
IGA Council Member  
Sheep and Beef Farmer



Emer Kennedy  
IGA Council Member  
Teagasc Moorepark



Fiona McGovern  
IGA Council Member  
and Teagasc



George Ramsbottom  
IGA Council Member  
and Teagasc



Laurence Sexton  
IGA Council Member  
and Dairy Farmer



Matt O'Keeffe  
IGA Council Member,  
IFM and Dairy Farmer



### Presentation to outgoing IGA President Jan Jensma

Maura Callery Irish Grassland Association Office Manager making a presentation to outgoing IGA President Jan Jensma on behalf of the council of the Irish Grassland Association



Mary McEvoy  
IGA Council Member  
and Germinal Seeds



Noreen Lacey  
IGA Council Member  
and IFAC



Pat Donnellan  
IGA Council Member  
and ICBF



Ronan Delaney  
IGA Council Member  
Sheep and Beef Farmer



Rosalyn Drew  
IGA Council Member  
Nitrofert

### Retiring members



Stan Lalor  
IGA Council Member  
Grassland Agro



Bryan Hynes  
IGA Council Member  
and Dairy Farmer



Eddie Gavin  
IGA Council Member and  
Sheep and Beef Farmer



Stuart Childs  
IGA Council Member and  
Teagasc Dairy Specialist



Thomas O'Connor  
IGA Council Member and  
Beef Farmer



Austin Flavin  
IGA Council Member  
and Teagasc



Brian Nicolson  
IGA Council Member  
and Sheep farmer



Mark Maxwell  
IGA Council Member  
and Beef Farmer



Michael Bateman  
IGA Council Member  
Dairy Farmer





## IGA Lifetime Merit Award 2018 review

**Matt O' Keeffe**  
IGA Council Member and  
Irish Farmers Monthly  
**Noel Culleton**  
IGA Lifetime Merit  
Award recipient



The Irish Grassland Association has awarded the Lifetime Merit Award to Matt Ryan for services to Irish grassland farming. To say that he is a most worthy recipient of the award is an understatement. Matt has devoted his entire career to furthering the economic value of grass as the main source of forage in the diet of livestock. He continues to be a passionate and outspoken advocate of maximising grass production and utilisation to enhance the profitability of milk and meat production in this country. The Lifetime Merit Award was presented to Matt at a special dinner in Cork on the eve of the IGA Dairy Summer Tour.

### CAREER TO DATE

Matt Ryan spent much of his early career with Teagasc, culminating in his appointment as Dairy Programme Manager in 2004, a novel role created by Michael Galvin, Teagasc deputy director at the time. It was in that role that Matt drove the Discussion Group model as the ideal way to transfer information and grass management skills to farmers. Since his

Teagasc career concluded it is no surprise that Matt continues to work at what he loves – driving dairy farm productivity and encouraging a decent work/life balance amongst his clients in his job as a dairy consultant. His own work/life balance still includes finding time for hurling and rugby matches among a range of other interests. Since retiring from his Teagasc career, Matt Ryan continues his advocacy of cost effective, grass-based milk production, co-ordinating six Discussion Groups around the country with another Group based in Scotland also availing of Matt Ryan's consultancy services.



### Citation by Noel Culleton, previous LMA recipient

Noel Culleton worked with Matt Ryan for many years and below is a citation from Noel that was delivered on the occasion of Matt receiving his Lifetime Merit Award.

*"I have known Matt Ryan for most of my career. I would find it hard to find a man more dedicated to the job of improving the efficiency of Irish grassland farming.*

*Matt's great gift is that he understands the potential of grassland to provide a good living for farmers. He realizes that the potential for profitability can be greatly improved if the grass is utilized efficiently.*

*Matt is a great believer in detail and every management tool is examined against a background of what it does to costs of production. Matt Ryan was one of the first to promote out-of-season grazing, he was one of the first to promote flexible rotational grazing. He appreciated the value of reseeding, provided it was done properly and the right grass seed mixture was used. Matt was forensic in his examination of the components of management systems and was never afraid to point out weaknesses when he detected them.*

*In my time as a grassland researcher, I used to love to attend meetings with Matt. You needed to have your facts well marshalled. If you said*

*something wrong or unproven, he would point it out very forcefully. The result was that the calibre of discussion was always excellent and I always went away invigorated and determined to try harder to get more and better information on whatever we discussed.*

*Matt's other great gift was his communication skills. Matt Ryan believed in, and encouraged the widespread establishment of dairy discussion groups in Ireland. It was largely due to Matt that farmers empowered each other in their efforts to improve their profitability. This is normal nowadays but when it started it was close to revolutionary. It has surely proved to be one of the best advisory tools in modern farming*

*I believe Matt Ryan has brought enormous benefits to grassland farming. I have no doubt that there are numerous farmers all over this country that owe a tremendous amount to Matt Ryan for the help he gave them.*

*I am delighted that the Grassland Association has decided to honour him for all his achievements.*

*Finally, I want to congratulate Matt on receiving this much deserved award."*

Noel Culleton.



Matt Ryan being presented with the Lifetime Merit Award from Jan Jensma IGA Council Member and Past President



## Nominations sought for the Irish Grassland Association Lifetime Merit Award 2019

Maura Callery, Irish Grassland Association Office Manager

The Irish Grassland Association Lifetime Merit Award was established in 2009 to acknowledge the unique life contribution of an individual to the understanding and application of grassland husbandry and technology. This prestigious award is a public endorsement on behalf of our Association and its members, to the great and important contribution made by the recipient to our industry and lives. Previous winners of this award are Paddy O'Keeffe, Sean Flanagan, Padraig O'Kiely, Norman Bateman, Seamus Hanrahan, Matt Dempsey, John Shirley, Noel Culleton, Andrew Cromie and Matt Ryan.

We are now seeking nominations for the 2019 Lifetime Merit Award. If you would like more information on this award please contact me on 087 9626483. If you would like to nominate a person for the award please email your nomination to [secretary@irishgrassland.com](mailto:secretary@irishgrassland.com) before 10th December 2018.

Irish Grassland Association  
Lifetime Merit Award



## Lifetime Merit Award Recipients







## Dairy Summer Tour – focus on high profit and high return dairying

**Michael Bateman,**  
Dairy Summer Tour committee  
Chairman & Dairy Farmer  
**George Ramsbottom,**  
IGA Council Member  
& Teagasc



The Irish Grassland Association Dairy Summer Tour focused on high profit and high return on investment in milk production when it visited two grass based dairy farms at Shinagh Dairy Farm and Rearour, Aherla. The event, sponsored by AIB Bank, took place on Tuesday July 24th and attracted an audience of over 450 dairy farmers. The major focus of this year's event was achieving a high whole farm profit on an owned farm and achieving a high return on investment on a leased farm. This theme was a follow on to the January 2018 Dairy Conference. To further explore the area, the Irish Grassland Association invited two milk producers, one farming on a mostly owned farm and achieving a high profit per hectare farmed and the second managing a converted fully leased unit yielding and achieving a high return on the investment made to host this year's Dairy Summer Tour.

Located at Rearour, Aherla, Co. Cork, Conor and Josie Kelleher farm 57 ha, practically all of which is owned. With an average of 142 cows grazing the farm in 2017, the milking platform stocking rate was 3.4 cows/ha. The farm grew over 16 tonnes

of grass dry matter per hectare in 2017. Conor's herd produced 527 kg milk solids per cow (4.50% fat; 3.75% protein) on 830 kg meal that year. The 2017 net profit after accounting for own labour and calculated from a base price of 30 c/litre was €2,113 per hectare of land farmed. Because the farm is owned, the return on asset was 6.9% that year.

Kevin Ahern, farm manager at Shinagh Dairy Farm, Bandon, Co. Cork has been involved in the conversion of the 78 hectare leased farm since it was established in 2011 by the four West Cork Co-ops. All of the land leased comprises the milking platform with the 232 strong dairy herd stocked at 3.0 cows/ha. The farm grew an average of 17.1 tonnes dry matter per hectare in 2017. The herd produced 397 kg milk solids per cow (4.54% fat; 3.79% protein) on 320 kg meal last year with 1,200kg of milk solids produced per hectare. The 2017 net profit after accounting for all labour costs and calculated from a base price of 30 c/litre was €1,226 per hectare of land farmed. Because the farm is leased, the return on asset was 12.1% that year.

We would like to thank our sponsors  
AIB for their continued support



Kelleher Family



Shinagh Farm





## Irish Grassland Association 2018 Student Conference



Emer Kennedy, IGA Council Member and Teagasc Moorepark  
Alan Kelly, IGA Council Member and UCD  
Adam Woods, IGA Council Member and Irish Farmers Journal

On October 8th last over 500 enthusiastic 3rd level students gathered in Teagasc Athenry for the annual Irish Grassland Association student conference which was kindly sponsored by FBD. Although it was the ninth annual IGA Student Conference it was the first time it was held in Galway and for many of the attendees this was their first foray with the Irish Grassland Association and one which sows the seed of the advancement of knowledge of good grassland management in Irish farming.

After the crowds gathered in Teagasc Athenry they set off on their first on-farm visit where they saw the Teagasc sheep flock, met researchers and beef farmer Kieran Henry. Dr. Fiona McGovern, researcher in Teagasc Athenry, updated students on the INZAC flock. She said approximately half the gains in animal performance achieved at farm level can be attributed to superior breeding or genetics. Since the establishment of Sheep Ireland in 2008, the ranking of Irish sheep on their genetic potential is possible. In contrast to Ireland sheep genetic indexes have been available for sheep farmers in New Zealand for over 20 years and large increases in sheep farm productivity and profitability have been achieved by the industry. Fiona said "research has shown that the rate of genetic progress is three times higher for the New Zealand sheep industry

compared to the Irish sheep industry". Although the New Zealand and Irish indexes are selecting animals for similar characteristics, a genetic comparison of New Zealand versus Irish elite ewes has not been undertaken under common environmental conditions. Therefore it is difficult to provide an answer to the compatibility of the New Zealand ewe to Irish grass based production systems. The Irish and New Zealand across country genetic flock (INZAC flock) is now in Teagasc Athenry to address this question. The flock consists of 180 ewes from two main breeds, Texel and Suffolk, representing the top genetic merit animals in the Irish and New Zealand maternal genetic evaluations. The objective of this flock is to allow for the benchmarking of elite Irish genetics compared to elite New Zealand genetics and to validate the Sheep Ireland replacement index. The flock will evaluate the performance potential of New Zealand and Irish sheep for animal characteristics such as lamb growth rates, milk yields, reproduction and lambing traits.

Dr. Philip Creighton spoke to students on the second stop of the day and provided an update on his current research projects, which included final results from the stocking rate and prolificacy trial conducted over the last number of years and well as discussion around his newly

Commenting on the event Carolyn O'Hara from FBD Insurance said "We at FBD Insurance are delighted to support The Irish Grassland Association Student Conference as it allows young men and women taking the next steps in their agricultural careers to learn from best in class. The results on Brian Hynes' farm shows yet again that the research being done works in the real world and we congratulate all involved in both the conference and the ongoing research."

established project looking at the incorporation of white clover into pastures for lamb production systems.

At the third stop on the Teagasc farm IGA council member Adam Woods interviewed beef farmer Kieran Henry. Kieran is farming just outside Tubercurry in Co. Sligo. He farms a herd of pedigree limousine cows but in 2015 Kieran took on an extra enterprise, contract rearing. He was struggling to make a decent margin with the sucklers and decided to think outside the box and take on contract rearing. The new enterprise fits really well alongside the suckler herd and it's been growing every year since. He now rears 56 heifers on an annual basis. Kieran explained to the students that good grassland management and high quality silage were both central to its success. Kierans advisor, Tom Coll told the students that he has seen huge interest in his area of Sligo/Leitrim in relation to contract rearing over the past 12 months. Tom now has a group of 16 farmers contract rearing and he explained the advantages and disadvantages for a beef farmer. Tom explained "A lot of beef farmers like the idea of a direct debit dropping into the account every month, it helps cashflow and managing it during the year." The costs vary but are in around €1.30-€1.40/day. Both men were very open to questions and explained that it wasn't for everybody but could be a very good supplementary income for some beef farmers. It's a good way of getting extra capital to grow a business and it could be a runner where there isn't a lot of capital to buy stock.

In the afternoon, students travelled to meet Bryan Hynes. Brian, who recently joined the IGA council, is a young dairy farmer who is currently farming in partnership with David Neilan. Clarin

farm was established in 2013 between the two neighbours. They joined their lands and farm assets and started milking their 81 jersey x cow herd in May 2013 on a 32 ha milking platform. They implemented a spring calving system and put a huge emphasis on three key points: growing grass, improving existing land on the milking platform and herd fertility. By 2017, cow numbers had grown to 167 with a 93% 6 week in calf rate and the farm was growing 15.5 tonne of grass per ha. An additional 9 ha block joining the milking platform was also leased in 2017. Bryan and David made the decision to look outside Clarin farm for expansion opportunities after maximising the potential of growth on the home farm. In 2017 they signed a 15 year lease on an existing dairy farm which is located 25 minutes from Clarin farm on the edge of the Burren in Co. Clare. The soil types are very similar on both farms. The plan is to maximise the grass growing potential of the rented farm and invest in what will provide the best return: grass and grazing infrastructure. Eighty in-calf heifers were purchased in late 2017 and they are currently milking 307 cows across the two milking platforms. Bryan's partner Deirdre joined the business full time and a neighbour does part time hours in Clare. The Neilan and Hynes families are a great support to Bryan and David's farm business. In 2017 Bryan received a Nuffield scholarship and his study focused on models for managing multiple dairy units. Students attending the event found the Clarin farm partnership story inspiring, especially those hoping to get into farming but with limited or no access to land.

There were two other stops on Clarin Farm – firstly Dr. Joe Patton, Teagasc, spoke to students about feeding options this winter. He showed



students how to assess current feed supply on farm and then how to evaluate different options to stretch forage all with an aim of ensuring that daily feeding targets are achieved and cows calve in the correct body condition score. Joe emphasised the point of meeting minimum daily NDF requirements per animal, particularly when a high proportion of concentrate feeds are being fed as part of the diet.

Fergus Bogue, from the Grass 10 programme, presented the final board of the day. Fergus spoke about the effects of the difficult grazing conditions encountered throughout 2018 and the subsequent effect this has had on grass DM production. He also outlined a good autumn grazing management plan to ensure swards are properly 'set up' for next spring. Fergus'

final nugget of information for the students was to firstly "Increase grass DM production and utilisation through more grass measurements in 2019 and secondly to make plans to rectify soil fertility & improve grazing infrastructure in the coming year".

The conference was an extremely successful and informative day for the large numbers present. However, none of it would have been possible without our hosts, Teagasc Athenry and Brian Hynes & David Neilan, Co. Galway, who we wish to offer our sincere thanks. Of course every event needs the backing of a good sponsor and we are extremely grateful for the generous sponsorship of FBD, who have now been sponsoring this event since 2010. We are already looking forward to 2019 – hope to see you there!



Clarín Farm Partnership

We would like to sincerely thank our sponsor FBD Insurance, who have sponsored this event since its inception in 2010



## Pre conference Networking Evening 2019

Laurence Sexton,  
Conference Chairman and  
George Ramsbottom,  
Conference Committee  
Member and Teagasc



### Theme: 'Dairying – future products and markets'

On the evening before the Dairy Conference (Tuesday 8th January), there is an exclusive opportunity for Irish Grassland Association members to meet at an evening gathering in advance of the Conference.

The 2018 guest speaker Jason Hawkins, Carbery CEO will be interviewed by former Irish Farmers' Journal editor, Matt Dempsey. Jason will address the topic, 'Dairying – future products and markets'



Guest Speaker  
Jason Hawkins  
Carbery CEO

We would like to thank our sponsors YARA for their continued support







## Annual Dairy Conference 2019

**Laurence Sexton,**  
Conference Chairman and  
**George Ramsbottom,**  
Conference Committee  
Member and Teagasc



The 2019 Irish Grassland Association Annual Dairy Conference, sponsored by Yara, takes place on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> January. Staying in the south west of the country, the Charleville Park Hotel plays host to this year's conference for the second year in succession.

Since the abolition of milk quotas, the rapid expansion of the dairy industry has resulted in an increasingly diverse range of systems of milk production. The prolonged and severe drought experienced during the summer of 2018 forced many farmers to purchase twice or three times as much feed and forge as normal and question the sustainability of their current dairy system. To address these issues, the Conference is divided into three parts:

- Profiling dairy farms operating profitable grass based systems of milk production;
- Producing more milk – is it always the answer?

- Outlining the grass, fertiliser and forage reserve targets required for sustainable grass based dairying.

**Profitable grass-based dairy farms:** Farmers Rhys James and Denis O'Donovan will describe how they operate their dairy farms and how their systems of milk production have evolved over the years. Rhys has been farming at Duck Pool Farm since it was purchased by the James family in 2008. He currently milks 300 dairy cows, producing 1,500 kilos of milk solids per hectare at a stocking rate of 3.5 cows per hectare feeding 1,200 kg of meal per cow. Denis farms near Rosscarbery in west Cork. Milking 150 crossbred dairy cows on a fragmented milking platform last year he produced 1,300 kilos of milk solids per hectare farmed again at a stocking rate of 3 cows per hectare using approximately 750 kg of meal per cow. Agricultural consultant Mike Brady will complement the two farmer speakers by reviewing the common characteristics of his most profitable dairy farmer clients.

**Is producing more milk always the answer:** With expansion of milk production continuing in Ireland, the IGA has invited Dr. John Roche to review Irish and New Zealand evidence for the true cost of the increase in milk production taking place. In his presentation John will review the evidence from a series of experiments conducted in New Zealand to evaluate the true cost and the profitability of different systems underpinning such increases in milk production.

**Resetting the targets for a new grazing season:** Particularly relevant in light of the fodder deficit experienced on many farms last summer, the IGA has invited three speakers to review targets and plans for the year ahead. Teagasc's Richard O'Brien will describe best practice regarding grazing targets for the spring and summer ahead. Stan Lalor of Grassland Agro will discuss fertiliser recommendations to maximise grass growth for the coming year – particularly relevant in light of the fodder deficit many farmers have at the moment. David Fogarty will outline the changes planned for 2019 at the Greenfield farm following a difficult summer and autumn on the farm.

### Booking the Conference

Online booking is the quickest method to secure your tickets (and you will also avail of the best discounts available). The IGA website can be accessed at [www.irishgrassland.com](http://www.irishgrassland.com). Alternatively you can post the completed Conference application form and your cheque to: IGA office, Cookstown, Kells Co. Meath.

## Dairy Conference 2019 Speakers

**Rhys James, Wales**  
Rhys started farming at Duckspool Farm when the family business purchased it in 2009. He milked 250 spring calving heifers in 2010. Through increasing stocking rate and the size of the farm he now milks 470 cows at a stocking rate of 4.4 cows per hectare. In 2017 milk solids sold per cow averaged 454 kg with 1.3 tonnes of concentrate fed per cow.



**Mike Brady, Brady Group Agricultural Consultants & Land Agents, Cork**  
Michael is a well-established agricultural consultant and land agent advising farmers across the Republic of Ireland. He qualified from UCD in 1987 with a B.Agr.Sc. (Hons) working firstly as a dairy adviser with ADAS in the UK. Returning to Ireland in 1989 he worked firstly as a consultant before establishing his own firm in 1995. He is also a past president of the Agricultural Consultants Association of Ireland.



**Denis O'Donovan, West Cork**  
Denis grew up on a fragmented dairy farm at Ballyvooren near Rosscarbery in West Cork. When he took over the farm in 1998 he milked 55 cows. Today the family-run grass-based dairy farm milks 150 Jersey cross cows producing over 1,300 kilos of milk solids per hectare farmed.



**John Roche, New Zealand**  
Dr. John Roche is the Chief Science Adviser for New Zealand's Ministry for Primary Industries and Managing Director and Principal Consultant for Down to Earth Advice Ltd. John is one of the most recognized authorities on the nutrition of grazing dairy cows, with a keen focus on profitability. More recently, he was Principal Scientist for Animal Science at DairyNZ and has also held science appointments with the National Centre for Dairy Production Research at Moorepark in Ireland, the Department of Primary Industries in Australia, and the University of Tasmania.



**Richard O'Brien, Teagasc**  
Graduating from UCD in 1992 with a B.Agr.Sc. degree, Richard has worked for Teagasc at Kildalton and in Offaly, Limerick and Kilkenny. Having completed a Master's Degree in 1998, he currently leads Teagasc's Joint Development Programme with Glanbia working closely with the Programme's dairy monitor farmers.



**Stan Lalor, Grassland AGRO**  
Stan graduated from UCD in 2002 and joined Teagasc in 2004 where he worked as a dairy adviser initially in Kildare and later in Monaghan. He moved to the Teagasc Soils and Environment Research Centre at Johnstown Castle in 2006, and completed a PhD with Wageningen University while working on soil, slurry and nutrient management research. Stan joined Grassland AGRO in 2014 as Head of Speciality Business.



**David Fogarty, Greenfield Farm Kilkenny**  
David graduated from UCD in 2014 with a first class honours degree in Agriculture. Based initially at the Teagasc office, Kilkenny he spent the past three years working as assistant farm manager on three different large scale dairy farms. In April of this year he returned to Ireland to manage the Greenfield Farm Kilkenny. His regular updates on its progress are widely read.



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## Managing the winter fodder deficit – A Dairy Perspective

**Matt O' Keeffe**  
IGA Council Member and  
Irish Farmers Monthly



Assuming that there will be adequate opportunities to import fodder for the coming winter is not realistic. That was a key message from Martin Ryan, Glanbia Technical Support manager for Feed when advising on how to cope with the expected shortfall in fodder supplies for the coming winter period. As Martin asserted: "The drought affected much of Western Europe so it is unlikely that there will be large surpluses of fodder available for importation. In addition, transporting bulky forages is critically expensive. Importing relatively small amounts is one thing, but it is not viable to import very large tonnages, even if it were available."

Looking at the figures, it is hard to argue with Martin's assertions. In the Glanbia region alone the estimated fodder deficit next Winter will be upwards of thirty percent. Substituting in the form of concentrates and straight feeds would take four hundred thousand tonnes. To fill that gap with imported fodder would require up to import two million tonnes of silage equivalent. That's not a realistic solution. Martin Ryan's advice is to work with what a farmer has available: "As it stands, if a farmer has fifty percent of his fodder requirement in store, he/she would be better managing the

other fifty percent with concentrates and straights than buying fodder from abroad. The importation of alfalfa by Glanbia and other co-ops was to fill a void at a time when some farms had no long stem fibre available in the diet."

### Feed choices.

The straight of choice is soya hulls, the Glanbia Manager insists: "Soya hulls are a dry, stable, high fibre, palatable product. Composition is consistent and at the moment it is readily available." He does not favour Palm Kernel Extract (PKE) as an alternative feed source: "For the nature of the situation we find ourselves in, palm kernel is not a good option. It is an inconsistent feed, it is not readily available and it has a detrimental effect on the quality of butterfat." This assertion is strongly contradicted by many farmers who have used PKE and find it to be a wholly acceptable feed ingredient for their cows. Agricultural consultant Matt Ryan insists that palm kernel, provided there are adequate tonnages available, will be a viable alternative feed source in the coming winter, especially for use in the dry cow diet. Feeding PKE during the dry cow period means that potential problems with butterfat composition do not arise. While some farmers experience difficulties with

using larger quantities of PKE, others have no problems whatsoever.

### Cattle management.

Martin's messages for drystock farming are the same as for dairy, in the main: He advocated selling all cattle that are surplus to requirements and that are market ready. In the Autumn period he suggested that there are opportunities to finish cattle indoors, thus reducing forage intakes and getting these cattle ready for sale in a confined time period. To build grass covers into the Autumn, in the wake of the drought, Martin Ryan advocated that lighter stock and stores could have a percentage of their feed requirements met by feeding straights where management and feed facilities make that a practical proposition. Reducing forage use in this way, means that whatever fodder reserves are in place or can be grown during the autumn period can be held over for winter feeding.

### Supporting each other.

The prolonged period of drought, in the wake of the long, wet winter lasting into May 2018, has affected the morale of farmers, as described by Martin Ryan: "The fact is that the fodder shortage is a problem, to a greater or lesser extent, for a majority of livestock farmers. The pressures are psychological as much as physical. It's the uncertainty around the provision of adequate fodder for the coming winter that is causing the most strain and planning ahead will help reduce that strain. Sharing experiences and fodder procurement and management plans can be both useful and supportive for farmers."

### Farm plans.

PJ O' Keeffe, the former Young farmer of the Year, takes a pragmatic approach to coping with the fodder shortage for the coming winter: "We have reviewed the plans for next winter regularly as conditions changed. We expected the drought to end far earlier and then had to review our plans accordingly when that didn't happen. In September we had a totally different plan in place than the one we constructed at the end of July. In the meantime, we had fed silage that we had expected to be available for winter feed.

Right now we can cope with a four-month winter by using different feeding strategies. That includes feeding extra concentrates to buffer available



PJ O' Keeffe

long stem fibre resources and we have bought in straights to manage the cost and availability of that alternative feed source. We also sourced and bought extra straw for feeding so that we can cope with whatever circumstances we find ourselves in next winter.

Like everyone else there is a limit to our contingency plans. Once we don't go over a five month winter, we are well fixed at the moment to cope with the situation." At the moment, PJ was taking every opportunity to gather in whatever extra fodder that came available on the farm: "Our hope is to cut some extra silage in mid to late September. That depends on growth and grazing requirements. A late Autumn with higher than average grass growth rates extending into October and November would have a very positive impact on both Autumn grazing and on grass supply next Spring, hopefully enabling us to turn out cows to a full grass diet earlier than normal." One of the most extraordinary aspects of the prolonged drought was that it continued to occur sporadically in various regions of the country.

As PJ explains: "Some farms in the Midlands and South-East endured drought conditions well into the Autumn. Other parts of the country were able to make up considerable ground in terms of growing extra grass for grazing and silage for second and third cuts. That should help to alleviate the problem countrywide because there will be fewer farms with very extreme fodder deficits."

The extra feeding of concentrates on livestock farms, most especially dairy farms over the Summer, means that cows are in good condition with optimum body condition score. That will ultimately make it easier to maintain those cows over the winter on limited feed stocks.





## Planning for the autumn/ winter ahead on sheep farms - A Sheep Perspective

Philip Creighton  
Teagasc Athenry



The last 12 months have been challenging to say the least. The early winter and late (non-existent) spring left fodder reserves totally depleted on many farms and this has been reinforced in many areas worst affected by the drought conditions during the summer. It will be more important than ever this autumn to try and build grass covers and to put plans in place to have adequate grass available for the flock in spring 2019. The temptation to keep sheep at grass for as long as possible or to re-graze closed fields in December/January will be there, especially this year where winter feed reserves may be low but this grass is worth much more in the spring to the freshly lambing ewe than in mid pregnancy.

A ewe's feed requirement in mid pregnancy is approximately half that of a ewe in early lactation producing milk for two lambs. Therefore, it is important to assess your individual circumstances now with regard to autumn grass availability and winter feed supply. We cannot burn the candle at both ends. If there is going to be a shortfall it will be more cost effective and have a greater effect on feed availability to supplement earlier than

normal in the late autumn/winter period to stretch available feed supplies than to try and supplement the diet of a lactating ewe next spring.

There are a number of actions/steps that can be taken now to help.

- 1) Complete a winter fodder budget for your farm now. Your local advisor/consultant will be able to help with this. A ewe will require approximately three quarters of a bale of silage over a 100 day winter feeding period. Teagasc have a winter fodder calculator that can help you to work out what quantities of feed you need for the various different categories of stock on the farm.
- 2) Assess autumn grass availability. Table 1 shows the autumn grass cover targets for sheep farms. If grass covers are below these targets there are steps that can be taken. Firstly, continue to spread chemical nitrogen (N) in September to build up grass. The closed deadline for nitrogen application has been extended this year by two weeks to September 30<sup>th</sup> to help build additional autumn grass.

**Table 1.** Autumn grassland targets for sheep

	Kg DM/L.U	Days ahead
Mid-September	300	25
Early-October	350	30
Mid-October	400	40

- 3) Another issue on farms this year has been delayed lamb drafting. To reduce autumn grass demand consider establishing a finishing lamb group where the most forward lambs (38kg+) can be separated and supplemented at grass. This targeted supplementation will maintain a steady drafting pattern and increase grass availability to the rest of the flock. Where grass supplies are tight lambs could be housed and finished over a short intensive feeding period. While this may not be the most desired option it will reduce grass demand and prioritise available grass to the ewe flock during mating and early pregnancy.
- 4) Create an autumn closing plan. To ensure adequate grass availability for ewes at lambing in March you should begin to close paddocks from mid to late October onwards. Table 2 outlines a suggested autumn closing plan for mid-season lambing flocks based on data from the Research Demonstration farm in Athenry.

**Table 2.** Suggested autumn closing plan for mid-season lambing flocks.

Date	% Area closed	+120 days
Late Oct	20	Early Mar
Mid Nov	40	Mid Mar
Late Nov	60	Late Mar
Mid Dec	80	Early Apr

Based on early March lambing flock, 120 day rest period over winter



It is important to build cover while grass growth is still active. Very little grass will be grown during December and January. When grass growth starts to increase again in February and March it is the earlier closed fields that will respond quickest to the increasing temperatures and an early application of fertiliser.

- 5) Where winter housing is not available or where winter bedding supplies are short and you want to reduce the length of the housing period ewes can be managed in an extended grazing system on grass built up earlier in the autumn with grass allocated daily or every second day. The important thing is that the sheep are confined to a smaller area of the farm (less than 20%) allowing grass supplies to build on the majority of the area.
- 6) Ewes could be wintered on forage crops if this option is available locally. It is too late to sow these crops now but crops have been established by some tillage farmers following harvest during the summer and may be available for grazing or conservation to boost feed supplies.

Finally, 2018 has been a stressful year physically, mentally and financially. Make use of all available help and resources to take steps to help your farming circumstances. Talk to advisors, fellow discussion group members, friends, and neighbours. Everyone has experienced the same problems. By working together and sharing experiences we can come up with the best solutions.







Table 2 below outlines the level of concentrate supplementation needed in a situation where you have 50 or 75% of your forage requirement available.

In a situation where you are restricting silage and feeding concentrates it is critically important that;

- You have a defined feeding plan in place to feed the restricted silage
- You have adequate feed space available so that all animals can feed at the one time. For example: this is 7 cows/standard bay (4.8m) or 9-10 weanlings. Offer fresh silage daily, keeping to a fixed feeding schedule if possible. You may need to plan to put in extra feed space using a feed trailer, ring feeder or extra troughs etc.
- If ration ingredients vary ensure that total energy, protein and fibre requirements are met.
- Monitor cow condition score throughout the winter. Thinner animals should be grouped together and fed additional feed to build up condition
- Don't forget to feed minerals;
- Ensure a good supply of fresh water;

**Table 2 Quantities of Silage and Meals to Feed with 50% and 75% of Forage Requirement available on Farm.**

	50% of Forage Available		75% of Forage Available	
	Silage Allowance (kg)	Meal Needed (kg)	Silage Allowance (kg)	Meal needed (kg)
Dry suckler (good condition)	20	2.5-3.0	30	0.5-1.0*
Suckler cow with calf	20	5-6	30	3-4
Store (500 kg) / Incalf heifer	20	3-4	30	2-3
Store (350 kg)	15	2-3	22	1-2
Weanling	12	2-4	20	2-3

\* Thin cows may require additional meals

c) Buy Wet or Alternative Feeds This may be an option if feeds such as brewers grains or fodder beet can be sourced. Just be aware of the protein and Dry Matter content of some of these feeds so that they are supplemented to provide a balanced diet. You should also be conscious of the fact of how you will store and handle these feeds to reduce losses. Ask yourself the question Is it practical for me to buy these alternatives?

Again some people will have access to forage crops just ensure you have a feed plan their use. Will extra forage or minerals be needed, Is there an adequate runback area? What are the risks with these crops? (Bloat, Nitrate poisoning/Iodine deficiency)

d) Reduce Stock numbers: Often people are reluctant to reduce stock numbers if market conditions are not favourable or there is a tax implication with reduced end of year stock numbers.

Even though prices are back for stock at the moment it may still be the correct decision to sell some stock. Apart from reducing feed demand it will release some cash to help overall cashflow. There is no guarantee after holding stock through an expensive winter that you will be rewarded in what could be an uncertain market next spring with Brexit looming.

Large consumers of feed such as cows that have been scanned empty or heifers that didn't go in calf should be targeted for extra feeding now and should be certainly gone pre-Christmas.

**It is important to realise that there are options if you are short of feed. The earlier you take action as outlined, the more choices you will have.**

Sit down this month if you haven't already done so with your adviser/consultant and work out a plan of action for your farm. Teagasc will launch a Feeding Booklet at the Ploughing Championships which will go through in detail all aspects you need to consider if you need to Stretch Fodder this Winter.

# A Year in my Wellies

Lauren Baker, Killeen, Birr, Co Offaly.



## Farm Update

The grass cover is currently 1,200 and we had great growth last week. The cows are going into covers of 1,800. The core platform is 140 ha but we have been grazing 35 ha of callow fields all summer. Every autumn is like a game of roulette as to when we think we will lose this ground under water. Usually at this stage we remove this land from our wedge and keep this callow land on a short rotation to prevent losing this valuable feed underwater. When we do graze it this is usually just treated as feeding silage to push up the platform cover.

We were happy with the breeding results with 9.2% of the cows empty and 4.5% of the heifers empty in 12 weeks. There is still a lot of room for improvement with these results however they were a slight improvement on last year's results so we are heading in the right direction.

## Continuous learning

Jeremy has been part of the Tesco Future Farmer Foundation this year, which has been a great learning experience for him. The course is open to all Irish and UK young farmers. The workshops cover areas such as self development, leadership, business strategy, staff management, financial literacy, obtaining bank finance, negotiation, obtaining land and succession. As a participant on the course, Jeremy also benefitted through study tours to various industries within the food chain such as meat processors and dairy co ops. He also found meeting other like minded young farmers and the opportunity to build contacts within the industry very interesting. Jeremy is also most grateful to his employers David and Tory for allowing him the time to participate in this experience.

I am also attending a business management and strategic planning course with Jeremy as we feel it is important for both of us to be on the same page when it comes to the business side of things. The course is run by Lynaire Ryan and her husband Richard who are both from New Zealand. We have attended two days so far and are really enjoying it.

## On Farm Improvements

The farm has started to implement some lean management principles to try and make things

simpler and save time. The farm is one large block of land split into three yards. We have started to question the way we do all tasks; it's surprising what things are glaringly obvious to change. A good example was looking at where we allocated grazing for yearlings and calves and silage cutting. Previously our calves stayed on the platform and grazed the furthest paddocks to prevent the cows having to walk too far, the yearlings graze callow ground and silage fields at the opposite end of the farm. We now graze our calves and yearlings from the same yard and concentrate extra silage where the calves previously grazed. Our previous daily youngstock check from the milking parlour, to the calves, to the yearlings is a 10km trip without going on any roads so its easy to see how we can make pretty big savings in time, fuel and wear. We have also put time into making tool shadow boards in the workshop and whiteboards in the office for extra KPI motoring and organization of work.

## 2018 round up

Storm Ali bringing the ploughing championships to a halt for a day genuinely sums up the rollercoaster of a year that 2018 has been! Here's to hoping this autumn is good to us. This is my last article for the IGA newsletter and I would like to say thank you to the IGA council for having me as contributor to the Year in my Wellies section of the newsletter this past year. I hope everyone has a good autumn and gets some well deserved rest over the winter.





# A Year in my Wellies

Stephen Coen, Teagasc Grange, University College Dublin and University Limerick



My name is Stephen Coen, a PhD student running a spring lambing pedigree Texel and crossbred sheep flock alongside a winter calving Limousin suckler cow herd in Lehinch, Hollymount, south Mayo, with my father Liam and my brother David. I am a first year PhD student working in collaboration with Teagasc Grange, University College Dublin and University Limerick. My research is based on bovine reproduction and in particular the impact of nutrition on age at puberty and reproductive performance of bulls. My father, brother and I all have off-farm employment as David works in Pallaskenry Agricultural College, Co. Limerick and Liam works for Bord Bia.



## Sheep Flock – Breeding Season

After an extremely challenging summer, grass growth has finally taken off around the country. This has come at an ideal time at home as we are beginning to flush our ewes before the breeding season. Sponges were inserted in to all ewes on the 29th of August with a view to mating all females on the 12th of September. Some of our top Texel females are selected for embryo transfer with the remainder of the Texels being laproscopically artificially inseminated. Half of our commercial flock will be selected for recipients as part of the embryo transfer programme. While the remainder of the commercial flock will be hand mated on the 12th of September also. So as you can imagine this will be an extremely busy few weeks. We are looking forward to the breeding season, especially after the purchase of our brand new stock ram Kilclammon Brody (pictured). Brody was purchased on the 11th of August at the National Texel Premier sale in Blessington, Co. Wicklow. This ram is 5 stars in

both the Terminal and Replacement index which is something that is very important on our farm with the flock being heavily involved in the Sheep Ireland programme. My brother David is very passionate about this and always makes sure that the Data Quality Index (DQI) of both our flocks is as close to 100% as possible. His experience of running the sheep flock in Pallaskenry is a huge asset to us and he has applied a lot of what he practices down there on our home farm.

Every year we produce pedigree Texel ram lambs for local sheep farmers throughout the Connacht region. We select replacement females for both our pedigree and commercial flocks on an annual basis. We predominantly use Texel stock rams and we have one Blue faced Leicester/ Suffolk hybrid ram. We use this ram to breed replacement females for our commercial flock. We like the crossing of these two breeds as we feel they are an excellent cross with our Texel rams. We feel these females offer us a higher litter size than the typical lowland breeds, high quality milk yield, continued fast growth rates along with good carcass confirmation and shorter days to slaughter on average when crossed with a Texel ram. These ewes are also excellent surrogate mothers for our embryo transfer lambs.

## Suckler Herd – Weaning/Mart

At this stage the majority of calves are now weaned. Some later calves are still to be weaned. November/ December born calves were weaned in mid-July and will be up for sale on the 10th of September in Ballinrobe mart, while a few later calves born in February will be sold in October. All weanlings are being creep fed while the spring born calves will be introduced to concentrates in the start of September. Only 2 heifers have been selected for replacements this year with four being selected last year (pictured). We like to breed red Limousin second cross Limousin x Friesian to ensure a good milk strain in the genetics. When using AI bulls for replacement we focus more on daughter's milk rather than the bull's replacement index as a whole. 75% of the breeding females are 4 or 5 star. Up until now we have always used a Charolais stock bull but next year we plan to use 100% AI. All cows will get a Charolais bull unless cows are selected for breeding replacements; in this case a Simmental or Limousin



bull will be used depending on the breed percentage of the cow. We aim to calf down all replacement heifers at 24 months. We have recently purchased a young Friesian bull that will be vasectomised and used as a teaser bull for the breeding season which commences on the 1st of February.

## Grassland Management

Grass is plentiful at home during this autumn season. Current grass growth/ha on our farm is 90 kg DM/ha/day, with an average farm cover of 850 kg DM/ha. We do a farm walk on a weekly basis and upload our measurements to PastureBase Ireland. One of our paddocks is currently taken out for silage. We have sufficient amounts of fodder going into this winter season. Our main grazing platform is located around the farmyard, with two out farms also. The ewes for breeding are located on one out farm and the suckler herd is located on the other. The grazing platform at home is currently being grazed by three separate groups including; pedigree Texel rams, commercial lambs being finished for slaughter and the suckler weanlings that will be sold in the coming weeks. All land is split into 1 hectare paddocks with a 3 line electric temporary fence dividing some of the paddocks. We are currently reseeding a paddock on the home platform. The soils in this paddock are peaty soils and we are using a perennial ryegrass seed mixture of Abergain, Aberchoice and Drumbo.

## PhD Experience

I started my work as a PhD student on the 5th of June 2018. I completed my final year Animal Science exams 2 weeks previous in University College Dublin (UCD). I have thoroughly enjoyed my first 3 months. All the staff in Teagasc Grange have been extremely welcoming and helpful during my time here. I am constantly attaining new skills and gaining more and more knowledge in my field of study. There is

a lot to take in but I feel it will stand to me over the next four years and beyond.

During my first 3 months I attended the International Bull Fertility Conference in Westport, Co. Mayo, where there was a wealth of knowledge available and excellent presentations were made over the three days. This included a very insightful vet lab in Balla mart which gave all Veterinarians, Researchers and students in attendance, a tutorial in Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluation, and much more. I gained some experience working with the National Cattle Breeding Centre in Naas, thanks to Bernard Eivers, Mairead O'Neill and everyone in the lab over there. I attended a two week Bioinformatics course in UCD, which was run by the GplusE project – Genotype Plus Environment, Integration for a more sustainable dairy production system. I also got the chance to help fellow PhD students here in Grange with some of their trials and doing so has given me a good grasp of what is required for my own work. My first trial will commence in mid-September where I will be sourcing young Autumn born Friesian bull calves and treating two groups with different levels of nutrition in order to see how nutrition impacts on age of puberty and maturity. We can do this through collecting various blood and tissue samples and analysing the data we gather and adding this information to the work that has already been carried out in this field. I feel it is a very exciting project and one that will be of extreme value to the AI industry going forward and it will also aid the rate of genetic gain of the national dairy herd.





# Good dry cow nutrition can help prevent many health problems

Assoc Prof Finbar Mulligan  
School of Veterinary Medicine  
University College Dublin



## Introduction

The periods directly before and directly after calving are critical periods for the health and welfare of the dairy herd. The issues that might arise at this time can impact on herd health and herd profitability through an extended influence on lameness, herd fertility, and mastitis. Many of these problems can be prevented by proper nutritional programmes for dry cows. In Ireland, the typical scenario for dry cows is a grass silage-based dry cow diet and a grazing early lactation diet. This year with many farms predicted to have a grass silage deficit, other means of feeding dry cows may be required.

## Dietary requirements of dry cows

### Energy requirements

Dry cows (600kg) require 6.4, 7.1 and 8.1 UFL per day when housed 3 months prior to, 2 months prior to and in the last month prior to calving, respectively. These requirements assume that cows are dried off with an appropriate BCS (Table 1). Grass silage is a very variable material, when consumed at a typical consumption level by dry cows (1.8 to 2.0% of body weight), some grass silages will provide an insufficient amount of energy for pregnant dry cows (depending on Body Condition Score - BCS) and some will provide too-much energy. Thus in all cases silage analysis is advised to properly formulate a dry cow diet. On farms with a forage deficit, care must be taken not to allow dry cows to become unacceptably thin. Thin cows have been proven to have a significantly increased risk of lameness, uterine health and retained foetal membranes issues. In cases where a grass silage deficit exists, a reasonable approach might be that dry cows are fed alternate sources of energy for all but the last 2-3 weeks of the dry period. This could be achieved by using forage crops grazed in situ with appropriate management (as has been demonstrated in Teagasc research) or by the use of straights such as simple mixes of soya hulls, palm kernel expeller, maize meal, maize gluten feed or soyabean meal. Your Teagasc advisor or nutritionist can help do the maths with the feeds available to put together a suitable diet in herds with forage deficits. What grass silage is available might be kept for cows close to calving. These cows require a high level of forage intake to prevent against displaced abomasum.

### Provision of adequate protein for dry cows

The requirement for protein (PDI) in the last 3 months of the pregnancy for dry cows is approximately 475, 535 and 605g/d for a 600 kg cow in appropriate BCS (Table 1). In most cases, with grass silage only diets this amount of PDI will be supplied. However difficulty arises if either the PDIN or the PDIE value of grass silage is less than 60g/kg of DM. Difficulties with PDI provision may also arise where straights or low protein forages might be included in the diet of the dry cow. It is important that silage is analysed and that the PDI values of alternative feeds are considered to determine the need for supplementary protein. PDI has now replaced crude protein for ruminant rationing, however for those trying to work with crude protein data for feed stuffs crude protein requirements of dairy cows approximating to 12.5% of DM and 13.5% of DM for heifers in the last month before calving are Internationally quoted guidelines.

### Herd body condition score

Having cows in the correct BCS at all stages of the lactation cycle should always be a priority. The most important aspect of dry cow nutrition is to ensure the correct calving BCS for at least 90% of the herd. Thus, if BCS corrections are required in late lactation or at dry off, a nutritional strategy should be put in place to ensure an appropriate energy allowance is offered. The recommended BCS for dairy cows at each point of the lactation cycle is depicted in Table 2. The group of cows that calve from March on are often at risk from over-conditioning as this group may have a prolonged dry period. It is important to monitor the BCS of the dairy herd throughout the lactation cycle to try and prevent this from happening. If cows need to be restricted or if cows are fed straights it is vitally important that all cows can consume feed at the same time with at least 0.7m of feed space provided per cow. Access to feed might be especially important for heifers. The heifer is still growing and in the last month before calving and might require as much as 8.5 UFL and 730 g of PDI per day.

### Type of energy for dry cows

There are many theories on why non-structural carbohydrate should be fed to late pregnant dry cows such as developing rumen papillae, acclimatizing rumen microbes and avoiding fatty liver. It is interesting that a large on-farm study recently completed in Northern Ireland did not find any benefit on milk production, fertility or culling as a result of supplementing concentrates for the final three weeks pre-calving for cows with BCS in the desired range. However, for thin cows, supplementing concentrates in the final 3 weeks pre-calving reduced the culling rate at 60-days post-calving. Thus the requirement for concentrate in the dry cow diet of most Irish cows should be driven primarily by concerns about BCS and silage availability and quality. For cows that will be fed 8kg of concentrate or more in early lactation, a conservative approach in keeping with the normal digestive physiology of the cow would be to feed 1kg of starch in the last 2 weeks pre-calving. This could be 2kg of a dry cow nut, 2kg of barley or 10kg of maize silage or whole crop wheat silage (as fed).

### Minerals for dry cows

The most important issue to be considered with regard to the major mineral nutrition of the dry cow is to establish a good basis for the control of milk fever and subclinical hypocalcaemia. Research with grazing cows in other regions has demonstrated that even where milk fever is relatively well controlled (clinical milk fever recorded in ca. 5% of cows at calving) that approximately 33% of the cows may experience subclinical hypocalcaemia. The UCD Dairy Herd Health Group has come across transition cow issues related solely to subclinical hypocalcaemia.

One of the most important aspects of maintaining control over milk fever and subclinical hypocalcaemia in an Irish context is to maintain BCS within the desired range at calving. Both high BCS and low BCS at calving increase the risk of milk fever. The magnesium content of the diet is also critical for the provision of an adequate calcium status. It has been reported that magnesium concentration is the single most important

dietary factor with regard to milk fever control. Based on typical magnesium concentrations found in Irish grass silage samples 20-25g of magnesium will be required from the dry cow mineral. For grass silages with below average magnesium status, the provision of 30g of magnesium per cow per day in the dry period is justified. For magnesium concentration in the dry cow diet the target is 0.4% of the DM. The next major mineral of importance in the dry cow diet is potassium. High levels of potassium are a major cause of milk fever and subclinical hypocalcaemia. There is a wide variation in the potassium content of Irish grass silages. Grass silages with a potassium concentration above 2.75% are particularly problematic and often cause problems in dry cow diets with clinical milk fever or the conditions which arise from subclinical hypocalcaemia (retained placenta and uterine infection). Previous reports indicate that approximately 11% of Irish grass-silages have a potassium concentration of more than 3.1% (Rogers and Murphy, 2000). In herds where this type of grass-silage is the sole dry cow feed, a carefully planned milk fever control strategy is warranted. Combining these grass silages with straw (if available) may well be appropriate, but correction for energy and protein allowance may be required depending on grass silage quality and cow BCS. Alternatively anionic salt products may be used for high potassium grass silages depending on the remaining mineral profile of the material. The recommended phosphorous content of dry cow diets is 0.3% of the DM. In many cases, Irish grass silages will supply sufficient amounts of phosphorous. However, in cases where silages have significantly lower than 0.3% phosphorous, then supplementation with 5 to 10g of phosphorous daily from the dry cow supplements may well be warranted.

### Trace elements for dry cows

International research continues to demonstrate the important roles that trace elements play in transition cow health and milk production. Herd cases of trace element deficiency also arise relatively frequently in Ireland without any systematic recording or reporting. Rogers and Murphy (2000) reported that within Irish grass silages 63% are low in copper, 43% are very low in iodine, 69% are very low in selenium and 29% are low in zinc. Trace element and mineral feeding should be based on a farm specific forage analysis as some grasses and grass silages have high concentrations of certain trace elements and toxicity may arise. Careful consideration is also warranted for farmers using forage kale or forage rape or hybrid brassicas. These crops are likely to contain goitrogens which may be problematic for iodine metabolism and due care should be taken to ensure supplementation is appropriate. Current advice from Teagasc is that dry cows grazing these forages should be supplemented by bolus.

### Husbandry of the transition cow

This paper has concentrated on nutrition *per-se*. However, on many farms, husbandry factors are very important for nutritional status. Issues such as inadequate access to feed and water, insufficient comfortable cubicle beds, and moving cows to the home-farm too close to calving, are much too common on Irish farms. These issues must be also addressed for an optimal nutritional status and cow health.

### Reference

Rogers, P.A.M. and Murphy, R. (2000) Levels of Dry Matter, Major Elements (calcium, magnesium, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sodium and sulphur) and Trace Elements (cobalt, copper, iodine, manganese, molybdenum, selenium and zinc) in Irish Grass, Silage and Hay <http://homepage.eircom.net/~progers/0forage.htm>

Table 1

### Dry cow diet Daily UFL and PDI recommendations (600 kg cow housed; BCS on target)

Months pre-calving	UFL/day	g of PDI/day
3	6.4	475
2	7.1	535
1	8.1	605

Add 0.35 UFL and 25 g of PDI per 50 kg increase in weight. Maiden heifers may have higher requirements due to continued growth prior to calving.

### Dietary major minerals and DCAD

Calcium	0.45% (none added unless DCAD is -100 to -200 meq/kg DM)
Phosphorous	0.3% of the diet DM
Magnesium	0.4% of the diet DM
Potassium	≈ 1.8% of diet DM (many silages will be higher)
DCAD	0 to 150 meq/kg of DM (Partial DCAD programme)
DCAD	-100 meq/kg of DM (Full DCAD programme, with nutritional advice)

### Supplemental daily vitamin allowances

Vitamin E	1,200 IU
Vitamin D	25,000 IU
Vitamin A	75,000 IU (NRC daily allowance is 100,000 IU)

### Supplemental daily trace element allowances<sup>1</sup>

	Normal concentration in forage	Deficiency in forage
Copper*	150	300
Se	3	5
Iodine	12	60
Zinc	335	750
Manganese	350	415
Cobalt	5	10

All values are for added trace elements in elemental form in mg/cow/day.

<sup>1</sup>Source: Control of Mineral Imbalances in Cattle and Sheep (Rogers and Gately, 1992; 2000)

Table 2

### Target BCS for dairy cattle at different points of the lactation cycle

BCS at Drying off	2.75-3.0
BCS at calving	3.0-3.25
BCS at 42 days in milk	2.75 minimum
BCS at breeding	2.75 minimum
BCS in late lactation	2.75-3.0

### 90% of the herd should meet these targets





## Getting Soil Samples in place ahead of 2019

**Stan Lalor**  
Council Member, Irish Grassland Association & Grassland Agro



It is often said that having grass in the spring depends on how you graze in the autumn. The need for autumn planning when it comes to soil fertility and fertiliser planning for next spring is no different. As we approach the end of the grazing season and head into the winter, now is the time to be make sure you have the right information ready in time for making fertiliser application and purchasing decisions next spring. The most important job in this respect over the coming weeks is to check your soil sample results and plan to take samples if necessary as soon as possible.

### Do I need new soil samples before next year?

There is a growing awareness amongst many farmers that more frequent soil sampling is a good idea, with many farmers now well settled in a routine of sampling every field at least once every 2-3 years. For regulatory purposes for nitrates, the minimum requirement is to have one sample for every 5 hectares farmed every 4 years.

Whatever your sampling routine, now is the time dust down your most recent samples and check if there are any areas of the farm where new samples are required and to organise getting the job done. Realistically, it could easily take in the region of 4-6 weeks between organising for getting samples taken, and then waiting for results to come back from a laboratory. So now is the time to start planning this out.

### Is soil sampling worth the cost?

Soil sampling costs money. Basic analysis of soil pH, lime requirement, phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) will cost in the region of €15-30 per sample, depending largely on whether the cost includes a sampling charge or not. Over 4 hectares (10 acres) per sample, in round figures this works out at between €4 and €8 per hectare. When samples are used over multiple years, the cost per hectare per year is lower again. Compared to fertiliser and lime costs, you could be spending anywhere up to or above €500 per hectare per year on these. When included in the annual cost of soil and grass nutrition on the farm, the soil sampling will be less than 1% of the total cost. However, this relatively small investment is critical to help ensure that the remaining 99% spent on fertilisers and lime is going to have the best chance possible of being effective at maximising grass growth.

### Timing & quality of sampling

A soil test result will only be as good as the quality of the sample taken. It must be representative of the area being sampled, so best practice regarding sampling pattern in the field as well as ensuring a uniform sampling depth of 10 cm is essential.

The timing of sampling is also important. Weather is one factor here, as soils that are either very wet or very dry can create a challenge for getting a good sampling depth. Also, with timing, being able

to leave the appropriate period, normally 3 months minimum, between sampling and the last previous fertiliser P or K or slurry application is important. This can cause a problem in practice where P, K or slurry are being applied in late summer or autumn, as it pushes out the sampling date into the new year. If samples are taken closer to previous P, K or slurry applications, be aware when interpreting the results that soil test results for P and K could be higher than expected.

### Look at trends over time

Soil test results are important for a 'point-in-time' picture of the soil fertility status. Simple soil nutrient maps (Figure 1 shows as an example for P Index) can be a great tool to help visualise parts of the farm with low fertility that need extra attention with fertiliser or slurry or lime.

Soil results are also very useful to establish the soil fertility trend on the farm over time. It is a worthwhile exercise when you get soil test results to sit down and compare the new result with last result you had for each field. Look at how the changes in the soil compare with the fertiliser and slurry applications and the grazing or cutting history in the interim period.

This exercise can be extremely helpful in building a picture of how the soils of your farm are responding to fertiliser and slurry applications over time in terms of soil fertility build-up or decline. It can also help assess how the grazing and silage areas are drawing on the soil fertility over time and gives a basis on which to judge whether the current fertiliser and slurry plan is supplying either too little (soil fertility dropping), enough (soil fertility steady), or even too much (soil fertility rising).

Where plans were previously put in place to build soil fertility, seeing how the soil fertility has changed helps in deciding whether the extra fertiliser or slurry applied for build-up has done its job and can be reduced, or needs to be continued or adjusted for the year ahead.

### Planning fertiliser and slurry for 2019

Whatever story the soil results show for the farm, the main thing is to put a plan in place for the year ahead that addresses the issues and gives you an action plan to get the soil fertility to where you want it to be, and then keep it there. This should start with deciding what fields need lime to increase soil pH, and also factor in maintaining soil pH over time.

A plan should also involve working out an overall fertiliser and slurry strategy appropriate to the 'average situation' on the farm for both grazing and

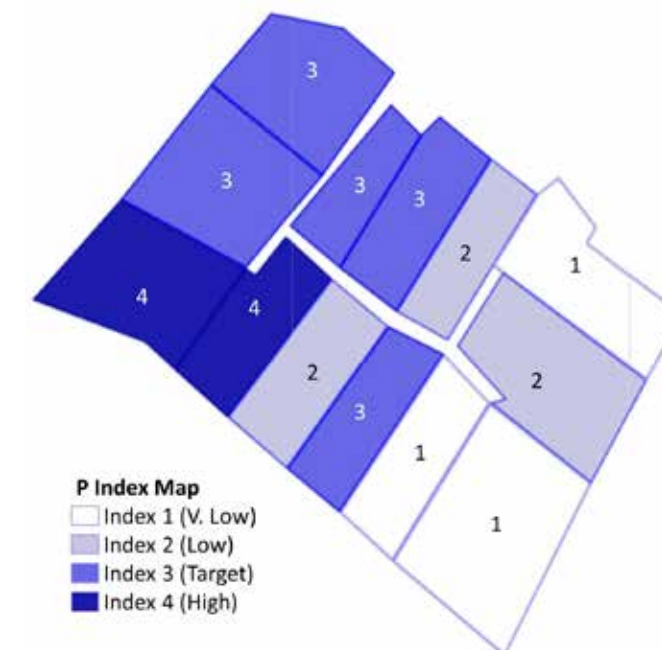


Figure 1: Simple maps showing parts of the farm that are high or low in any nutrient (e.g. P in this case) can be prepared to help with fertiliser and slurry application decisions.

silage. This generally consists of a typical N, P, K and S requirement across the year and at specific timings and then planning the slurry or fertiliser products required at each timing to do this. It is important to do this for both the silage areas as well as the grazing platform.

Then finally, look at the fields that are not average – usually the low fertility fields. A simple plan to change one or two products or application rates at key timings can make the difference required to get extra P or K on where the field requires it. For build-up programmes, extra P is normally best targeted in early spring so that P is available to drive spring growth. For extra K, autumn is usually preferred to help avoid magnesium uptake imbalances in the grazing season.

### Act now to simplify the work in spring

Organising the soil sampling and building a plan around the results does take time and effort. Get help as needed to get it done. This is the time to do it, not the spring when cows are calving!

Having soil samples available to put a plan in place as soon as you can will make the decisions around what products to buy next spring much simpler. It will allow you to know in advance exactly what fertilisers you need and give you more confidence that the fertiliser and slurry applications are going to give the best possible chance to maximise the return for your money.



# Promoting Farmer 'Total Health'

Dr John McNamara,  
Teagasc Health  
and Safety Specialist



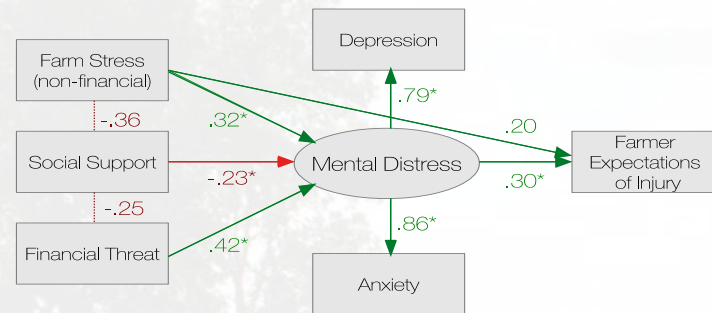
We live in challenging times with the current drought, fodder shortage and associated financial issues. There are many issues in farming that can cause stress and associated ill health and injury. Many studies, however, indicate generally a high satisfaction and quality of life associated with countryside living. Individual circumstances can arise however which lead to stress.

The 'Total Health Model' indicates that, safety, health and mental health are inter-related and these components need to be promoted holistically. Irish research (McNamara et al, 2017) indicates that occupational health and safety (OHS) is a management attribute and is strongly associated with overall farm management.

## Stress and Injury

A further study among Irish Dairy farmers with a particular focus on the effects of financial threat gives information on the pathways leading to both mental distress and Farmer Injury Expectation (FEI) (Furey et al, 2016). The model which best explains the data is depicted in Figure 1. Both farm stress (non-financial) and financial threat leads to mental distress and in turn to FEI. Mental distress leads to both anxiety and depression. Farm Stress (non-financial) leads directly to FEI. Social Support alleviates Mental Distress, Farm Stress (non-financial) and financial threat. A higher co-efficient indicate a stronger relationship, while a co-efficient indicated in red and with a minus sign indicates that the effect is in the reverse direction to the arrow direction (ie social support has a positive effect on Mental Distress).

**Figure 1:** Irish Model for Farm Stress and Social Support on Farmer Expectation of Injury (Furey et al., 2016)



## What is stress?

Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand that makes you feel threatened or upsets your balance in some way. When working properly, stress helps you to stay focused, energetic and alert. But beyond a certain point, it can stop being helpful and start causing damage to your health, your mood, your productivity, your relationships and your quality of life. Anyone can suffer from stress. Every person has a different reaction to stress. Some of the more common warning signs outlined in Table 1 indicate that it's time to manage stress and consider getting help.

## Stress in Farming

International studies (USA, Norway, Ireland) indicate that the major stressors among farmers include: farm finances, dealing with paperwork, poor farm work conditions such as poor safety standards, excessive workload and poor health. Thus, it can be seen that farm management practices can strongly influence stress levels. Across all sectors, having positive working and personal relationships is helpful in preventing stress.

**Table 1:** Signs of Stress.

Physical Signs	Mental Signs,	Behavioural Signs
High blood pressure	Negative attitude	Loss of interest & enjoyment
Muscle tension	Reduced concentration	Withdrawal from friends & family
Disturbed sleep pattern	Forgetfulness and confusion	Irritability & mood swings
Weight change	Difficulty in making decisions	Increased drinking, smoking, or drug use
Reduced energy	Feeling uncertain or overwhelmed	Loss of sense of humour.

Source: IFA leaflet- 'Let's Talk – Dealing with Stress'

## Managing Stress

A key approach to managing stress is recognising the signs and responding to them. Research, however, indicates that provision of information on stress on its own does not affect behaviour. Each person must realise or 'become aware' of the issues leading to stress and then adopt positive strategies to minimise the stressor. Changes to manage stress in a farming context can include such changes as modifying the farming system to cut work time or having a health check completed.

## Positive Strategies:

- **Social Involvement is crucial.**
  - Talk to trusted family members, neighbour and friends.
  - Discuss farming problems with your Agricultural Advisor.
  - Farm Discussion groups have a valuable social dimension as well as a practical farm one which is positive to solving problems and managing stress.
  - Farming and sporting organisations perform valuable social networks in rural Ireland.
- **Health related goals.**
  - Have a regular health check-up with a G.P. Forming this habit is crucial in the long-term.
  - Exercise regularly; being physically active is a key approach to stress management. Farm work activity, however, may lead to 'strength' but not to 'aerobic fitness' which is required for cardiovascular health.
  - Eat a balanced diet, including fruit and vegetables. Some foods in excess such as alcohol, chocolate, coffee and soft drinks cause increased tension.
  - A Health Booklet of Farms is available on the Web.
- **Farming.**
  - Examine your farm for hazards and remove them.
  - Work organisation is crucial to avoid long hours, rushing and injury.
  - Examine the profitability of your farm-complete a profit monitor. Numerous studies indicate that efficiency beats scale in terms of profitability.
  - Check the length of your working day - excessively long working days can lead to isolation.
- **Leisure.**
  - Take time out every day for relaxation.
  - Take regular breaks and a holiday from farming. These allow your mind to refresh itself.

## Services Available.

- Teagasc and Farm Consultants are available to farmers nationally to advice on farm management issues. Farming organisations offer services to their members.
- A persons GP should be consulted regularly and when needed.
- A range of both Local and National Support Groups are available.
- The Samaritans can be contacted at **1850 60 90 90**. Their website <http://www.samaritans.org> gives a list of support agencies.
- St Patrick's University Hospital, Dublin provides a support & Information Service staffed by experienced mental health nurses 9-5 Monday to Friday with an answering and call-back facility outside hours. You can contact the Support & Information service by calling **01 249 3333**.

## Managing Farm Safety

It is a legal requirement to complete a Safety Statement. For farms with 3 or less employees it is permitted to complete a Risk Assessment under a Statutory Code of Practice. A Risk Assessment Document and Code of Practice is available for the Agriculture sector in Ireland. New green colored documents have been issued and these need to be completed by the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019 to replace the previous white coloured documents. If a person has more than 3 employees, it is advised to complete the Risk Assessment document first and then complete a Safety Statement. All documents are available on the H.S.A. website at: [https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Your\\_Industry/Agriculture\\_Forestry/Overview/Agriculture\\_Code\\_of\\_Practice/](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Your_Industry/Agriculture_Forestry/Overview/Agriculture_Code_of_Practice/)

Teagasc and Agricultural Consultants provide a Half-Day Training Course on the Risk Assessment Document. This is a mandatory requirement for drawing down DAFM TAMS11 funding.

Finally, it is advised that document completion is a means to an end: giving a focus for taking action to prevent injury or ill health.

## References:

Furey E.M., O'Hara,D., McNamara J., Kinsella S., Noone C., (2016). The roles of financial threat, social support, work stress and mental distress in dairy farmers' expectations of injury. Published in *Frontiers in Public Health, Occupational Health and Safety*, an online open access journal and is available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2016.00126>  
McNamara,J., Griffin, P., Kinsella, J., Phelan, J. (2017). Health and Safety adoption resulting from use of a Risk Assessment Document on Irish Farms. *Journal of Agromedicine*, 22 (4), 384-394





At the launch of the Embrace 32 county "Our Drive to Remember Campaign 2018"

## EMBRACE FARM – Farm Accident Support Network

Catherine Collins,  
Business Development  
Manager, EMBRACE FARM.



Embrace FARM, is a farm accident support network established in 2014 by Brian and Norma Rohan of Shanahoe, Mountrath, County Laois to be a support for all affected by farming accidents. In 2013, Brian lost his father Liam in a tragic farming accident on their family farm. In the aftermath of their accident, they discovered there wasn't any supports to families that had suffered so tragically as they did and decided to arrange the first ecumenical remembrance service in the church of the Most Holy Rosary in Abbeyleix in 2014. With the support of their local community, farming organisations as well as many well-known VIPs, the first service held over 600 people.

Every year since then the service is held on the last Sunday of June around the Summer

Solstice. Over 140 families whose beloved family member lost their life in a farming accident, has their name read out in tribute to their memory. There is a different theme representing these lost lives for people to connect with and bring a memento home after the service. In 2018, this was a tree of life, where a handwritten feather with the name of the person being remembered was placed upon it.

The Embrace FARM Network is there to support those who have lost their lives in a farming accident as well as those who have suffered a serious injury, its main focus is being there for people after an accident. Grief affects people very differently, and Embrace FARM brings together people at very different stages of the process. In addition to its annual ecumenical remembrance service, family weekends are hosted for families that wish to participate and share their experiences to help one another in their own individual journeys. Family weekends with young children and older siblings are held. A gathering of spouses who have lost their partners is held once per year, where a group of people spend time together

and share the space with one another. Each family weekend is coordinated by qualified counsellor, Brid Carroll, who is on hand to assist families at a deeper level.

For farm accident survivors, 2018 will see Embrace FARM hold it's second farm accident survivors conference. This meeting is about helping those connect who suffered serious injury as a result of a farming accident. There are farm accident survivors sharing their

stories, keynote speakers attending to the mental health of farmers that have suffered and practical advice from industry specialists.

Embrace FARM supports the importance of farm safety awareness. For 2018, a 32-county tractor drive has been undertaken to remember 290 lives lost across the entire Island of Ireland for the last ten years and for awareness of farm safety to all in each county.

Embrace FARM operates solely on the kindness of people fundraising on its behalf. Having obtained its full charitable status as a milestone in 2017, Embrace FARM welcomes any fundraising initiatives and will help organisers in line with its fundraising policy.

Please contact Embrace FARM for fundraising or support at  
 Email: [embrace.farm@gmail.com](mailto:embrace.farm@gmail.com)  
 Phone: 085-7709966  
 Website: [www.embracefarm.com](http://www.embracefarm.com)  
 Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/embracefarmaccidents/>  
 Twitter: @EmbraceFARM



'Tree Planting' Ceremony at Embrace Farm Remembrance Service 2018





**Irish Grassland Association**

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## **Pre-Conference Networking Evening**

**Charleville Park Hotel  
8th January 2019**



## **Dairy Conference**

**Charleville Park Hotel  
9th January 2019**



## **Sheep Conference and Farm Walk**

**Meath  
23rd May 2019**



## **Beef Conference and Farm Walk**

**20th June 2019**



## **Dairy Summer Tour**

**23rd July 2019**



## **Student Conference**

**October 2019**

