

Teagasc Discussion Groups

Labour efficiency and practices

Pat Clarke,
Teagasc, Athenry

Introduction

- 70 discussion groups, 1,000 farms
- Labour input, practices and facilities
- Objective – measurement for discussion

	Average	Top 5%
Hours work/cow (excl. contractor)	47	22

Farmer - Labour input

	Average	Top 5%	Kerr/Ahern
Start time	7:03am	7:06am	6:52am
Finish time	7:02pm	6:01pm	5:41pm
Holiday in last 2 years	77%	94%	100%
Actual hours worked per week	63	57	51
Acceptable working week (hours)	58	55	47

Small changes – Big effects

Time

- 50 calves - 12 sec/calf/day = 10 mins/day
- 100 cows – 12 sec/cow/day = 20 mins/day

= 3.5 hrs/week or **35 hours work over 10 weeks**

Work

- 50 calves fed 6 litres per day for 10 weeks

= 2.1 t milk per week or **21 t milk over 10 weeks**

5 key areas

- **Calving/Breeding**
- **Calf Rearing**
- **Milking process**
- **Grassland**
- **Organisation**

Calving

	Average	Top 5%	Kerr/Ahern
Serious assists	9%	6%	2%
Nights up	27	24	14
Calving camera (yes)	63%	51%	0%

Calving – Cow & Facilities

Cow condition

- Target 3.25 at calving

Easy calving sires

- Use CD% on list

Good animal health

- Dry cow minerals

Pre calving area

- Location



Breeding

	Average	Top 5%	Kerr/Ahern
Length of season (wks)	16	14	12
Drafting available	57%	74%	100%
Heifers synchronised	32%	51%	100% (CR)

***“They will figure it out when their
cow numbers increase”***

Dairy farmer (300 cows)

Calf rearing

	Average	Top 5%	Kerr/Ahern
Date calves to grass	Apr 10	Mar 22	CR
OAD feeding (yes)	28%	58%	100%
Meal feeding calves summer (yes)	86%	74%	CR

Milking Time

	Average	Top 5%	Kerr/Ahern
Total milking time	2:33 hrs	2:47 hrs	2:40 hrs
Start evening milking	5:13 pm	4:10 pm	4:15 pm
Auto yard cleaning	42%	69%	50%
Milking interval	9:54 hrs	8:57 hrs	9:00 hrs

“I walk across the field to my house at 5:30 every evening”

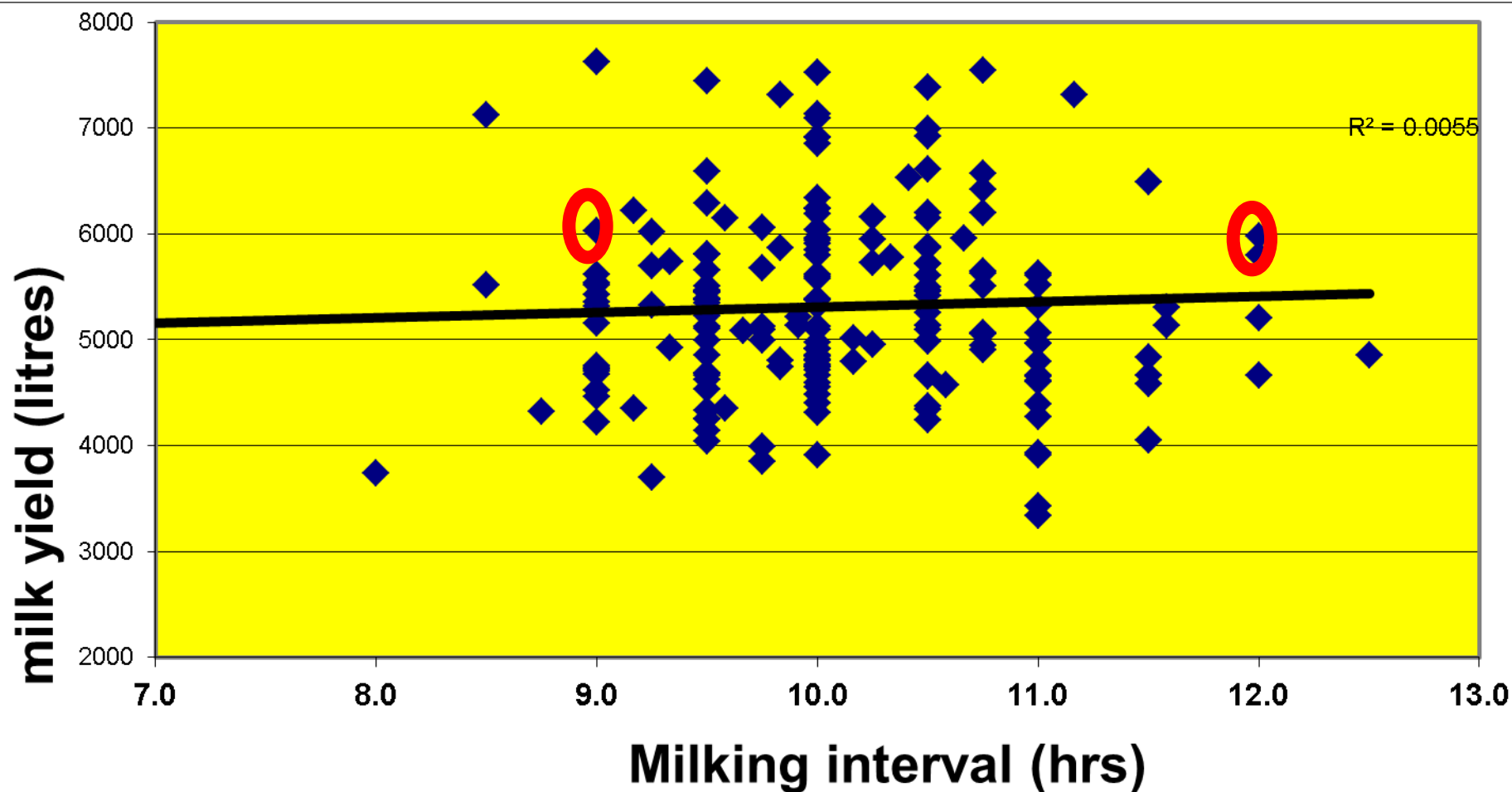
Dairy farmer, 100 cows

Milking

- Start time in evening
- Shorter milking interval (9hrs)
- Rarely delay evening milking
- Once a day milking (spring)



Milk yield and milking interval



Grassland

	Average	Top 5%	Kerr/Ahern
Length of winter (wks)	14	11	11
Topping - none or one	57%	82%	100%
36 hr summer grazings	36%	46%	100%
Blanket spreading fert	73%	74%	100%

*“We have nothing to do in
late January”*

Dairy farmer, 300 cow herd

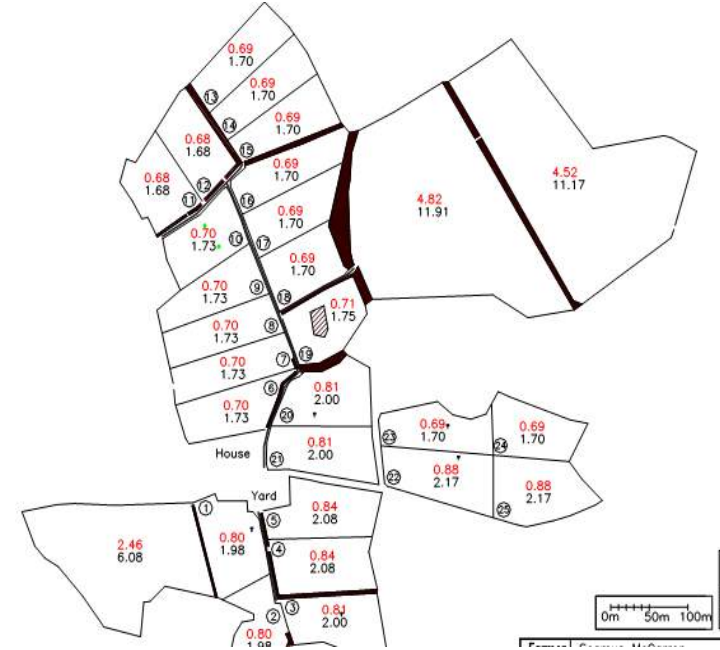
Organisation - Contracting

- Timely use of contractors
 - Slurry – 50% (36%)
 - Fertiliser – 23% (11%)
 - Replacements – 18% (5%)
 - Milking – 35%



Organisation - system

- Keep simple system
- Structured daily/monthly events
- Separate farm office
- Farm map/written instructions



Summary

Audit your farm – your input and practices

1. Keep system simple
2. Adopt efficient work practices – no cost
3. Appropriate facilities – planning required