

Programme for the day

Venue: Chris and Philomena McCarthy,
Crookedwood, Co. Westmeath, N91 FX22

6.00pm Assembly & Light Refreshments

6.30pm Opening Address

6.40pm: Farm Walk Commences

Topics to be covered:

- Farm Introduction
- Animal & Financial Performance
- Grassland Management
- Animal Health
- Profitable & Sustainable Beef Production

8.00pm Close of event



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Photographs will be taken at all events and occasionally published.

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Irish Grassland Association

FREE
EVENT

BEEF FARM WALK CO. WESTMEATH

13th June 6-8pm



Sponsored by



Event Speakers



**Eoin Ryan MVB, MVM,
DipECBHM, PCertBI**

A 2001 UCD, Dublin graduate, Eoin worked initially in mixed, mainly farm animal practice for Dundrum Veterinary Clinic in Limerick and Tipperary, Republic of Ireland. In September 2002, he took up employment as intern in Large Animal Clinical

Studies in UCD followed by 3 years as Large Animal Clinical Scholar. He returned to farm animal practice in February 2007 with Mulcair Veterinary Clinic in Tipperary and Limerick and worked there for 4 years. In September 2010, he took up the position of Resident in Bovine Health Management in UCD. In 2012 he was appointed Lecturer in Integrated Farm Animal Health in UCD and was conferred with a Masters in Veterinary Medicine (MVM) following research carried out into leptospirosis in the Irish suckler cattle population. Following the successful completion of the certifying examination of the European College of Bovine Health Management (ECBHM), he qualified in July 2013 as a European specialist in bovine health management and currently works in UCD Dublin as Lecturer in Farm Animal Clinical Studies. His interests include bovine surgery, internal medicine, herd health and clinical pharmacology.



Aidan Murray, Teagasc

Aidan began working with Teagasc in 1995 as a Dairy adviser in Clonmel and then as a Drystock adviser in Carndonagh before moving to Grange Research centre in 1997 to take up a role as a Beef Specialist tasked with developing Beef Discussion

groups. In 2008 he took up the role of Programme Manager setting up and developing the Teagasc/Farmers Journal Better Farm Programme. Since 2014 he has been responsible for providing beef advisers with technical training and Discussion Group development. He has a keen interest in grassland, breeding and animal health and he currently sits on the BVD Implementation Group with Animal Health Ireland.

Farmer Profile: Chris McCarthy



The McCarthys' farm is made up of 28ha of relatively free-draining soil and has the added advantage of being on one block. The farm is home to a spring-calving herd comprised of 46 Limousin cows mated primarily to terminal Charolais stock bulls.

Alongside the commercial herd, Chris runs a small number of pedigree Charolais cows which provides stock bulls for his own use as well as selling a number of breeding stock each year. The current stock bull is a Doonally New (CF52) bred bull with Chris having a fondness for other Charolais stalwarts such as Pirate (PTE).

When he combines these terminal genetics with his three-quarter bred, red Limousin cow, the results speak for themselves with outstanding quality suckler stock being bred on the farm, consistently over the past number of years.

Historically, replacements were purchased as in-calf heifers from one or two sources but Chris found that these were getting more and more expensive and so he has since moved to bringing in maiden heifers over the past two years.

The farm is quite heavily stocked and in the past Chris has been in derogation but now operates just below 170kgN/ha each year. This high stocking rate helps to drive the output/ha ultimately driving the profitability of the farm.

Calving starts the first week of February and is typically finished by St Patrick's day. In 2021 there was an issue with a sub-fertile bull which has resulted in the calving spread increasing



Farmer Profile: Chris McCarthy

slightly over the past two years but it is something that Chris is working on pulling back quite quickly.

Cows and calves start to be turned out to grass in small numbers as soon as the weather conditions allow which is typically around the 15th to 20th of February with around the 10th of March being the mean date for turnout.

The grazing infrastructure on the farm is simple but effective. Chris can move a batch of stock singlehandedly anywhere on the farm. He says that stock are used to getting a move to fresh grass and so he can lead them to new grass when they need a move.

Good genetics combined with excellent grassland management is key to high growth rates in calves over the first season at grass. Chris was measuring grass in the past when he was a member of the Teagasc/Irish Farmers Journal BETTER farm programme but has moved away from it in recent years.

The system in place could be described as being simple, but very effective. Being busy off farm means that every hour on the farm needs to be productive. Chris estimates he spends around 15 hours per week on the farm across the entire year. The biggest workload is obviously in winter and during the calving season but Chris is slow to handle cows at calving if they don't need it.

One change implemented is the move from a weanling trading system to an under 16-month, bull beef operation. At weaning, which takes place in late September, bull calves are typically 350kg to 360kg. They are fed meal two weeks pre- and for four weeks post-weaning and once housed in November they start on 2kg of ration which increases to 4kg by the new year. This moves to 6kg by 1st of February and ad. lib by the 1st of March.

There has been an increased focus on silage quality on the farm over the last number of years also with Chris seeing it as a key way to reduce the total amount of meal fed to bulls. Currently, they are consuming around 1.8t/head lifetime of concentrate. These bulls are achieving big weights at under sixteen months with average carcass weights around 460kg. These animals are going on the grid and are typically grading U+ for conformation and 2+ on average for carcass fat score. Chris is working closely with his processor to ensure the market is there for this type of stock each year.