

Tillage

Winter Crops for 2018 have established reasonably well despite the difficult conditions. In 2017, the level of rainfall in the period from Oct to Dec was double the total for the same period in 2016, meaning crops are sitting in wet, cool soil. Early fertiliser will be important to get crops growing as soon as the weather picks up. The biggest factor determining cost per tonne of grain is yield, therefore yield per hectare needs to be maximised in a cost effective way. Getting the basics right is imperative, in particular having a good seed bed and suitable soil fertility is essential for growing a high yielding crop. A fertiliser plan should be completed for all crops at this stage and the plan should be based on crop off takes and soil test results. Big yields of winter barley straw in 2017, has removed high levels of potassium. Organic manure is a valuable source of nutrition and can be sourced locally, but remember slurry can be variable, transport costs and field damage need to be considered.



Spring Crop Rotation

Now is the ideal time to consider and plan your spring crop rotation. Beans are a very good break crop and

performed well in 2017 both in terms of yield and financial return. See below for details on spring varieties available from

Bretts' this year. All these varieties are fully approved on the 2018 Department of Agriculture Recommended List.

Brett Varieties	Spring Barley		Spring Oats	Spring Wheat
	Mickle	Planet	Husky	Quintus
Yield	100	105	106	102
Comment	Good yield and grain quality, best straw on list, suitable for fertile sites, good on Rhyncho.	Highest yielding variety on list, good disease package, excellent grain quality.	High yield, good grain quality and strong straw.	Highest yield, good straw, moderately susceptible to mildew.

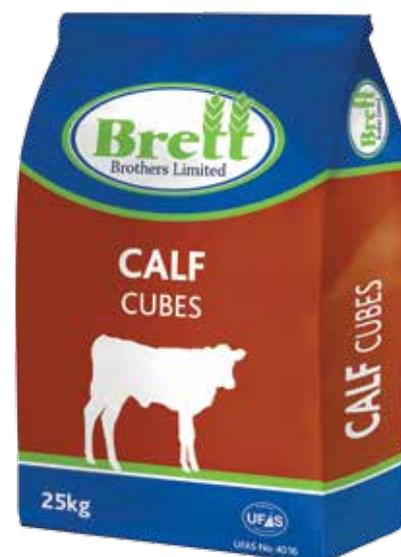
It is important to check thousand grain weight (TGW) of seed as it can vary greatly between varieties. There can be a difference in sowing rate of up 16kg per hectare between varieties.

How to reduce labour during the 2018 calving season

By reducing the amount of time spent treating problem cows and sick animals, there is more time available to invest in calving and starting the year off right.

- Feed adequate levels of **Bretts' PIP dry cow minerals** to improve the immunity of both the cow and calf.
- Use **Reviva** for older cows or those that struggled during calving.

- Get cows off to a good start by feeding adequate levels of **Bretts' PIP range of dairy nuts (Milk Well, Milk Excel, PIP Dairy 16% and Maxi Breeder)**.
- Introduce **Ultra Calf Cubes** to calves at 4 days of age, and ask about including **PULMOCX**, a feed additive that has proven to reduce incidence of coccidiosis scour and pneumonia on farms.



Q&A's with our Ruminant Support Team

The outlook for 2018 is positive, milk price is holding up for the moment, and cows are in relatively good condition despite disappointing silage quality in many yards. In 2017, most farms had more consistent feeding levels during the spring and summer months which, resulted in an improvement in milk solids output and fertility over 2016 performance. A lesson learned in many cases which will follow through to 2018.

Q: How can you achieve increased output with no investment in fixed costs, stock or land?

A: Optimise milk production from grass and supplement cows in early lactation according to your herd's milk potential and forage supply. This will ensure the herd is fit for breeding and ready to take advantage of potential milk price in the back end of the year.

The key to good fertility is to minimise body condition loss in the first six weeks of lactation by maintaining adequate dry matter intake. As a result, concentrate feeding levels should not be set in stone and uncompromising, but reactive to

increasing herd demand, weather and your overall forage budget.

Q: What to feed?

A: The average protein in the total diet, including grass, silage, straw and parlour feed, should be at least 16%. On silage only, feed at least an 18% dairy nut, such as **Milkwell** or **Milk Max**. If silage quality is poor our 20% Milk Excel is advised as it has higher protein and energy.

If grass and silage are included choose from **Brett's PIP Spring Dairy 16** or **Ultra Dairy 16** which have flexible feeding rates to supply enough cal-mag and minerals at lower feeding rates while allowing increased feeding levels when grass supply is reduced.

Remember; your cow's immunity is at her lowest for the first three weeks after calving. Reduce the time spent treating sick cows by using **Bretts' Performance Improvement Pack (PIP)** in your dairy nuts and dry cow minerals.

Recommended concentrate supplementation depending on forage type and supply

Forage Available	Milk Yield		
	22 Litres	26 Litres	30 Litres
Indoors fulltime on 70% DMD Silage	6.5 Kgs	7.5 Kgs	8.5 Kgs
Indoors fulltime on 65% DMD Silage	7.5 Kgs	8.5 Kgs	9.5 Kgs
Grass by day (6 kg DM) Adi-Lib 70% DMD silage by night	5.0 Kgs	6.0 Kgs	7.0 Kgs

This table gives an approximate guideline, for detailed recommendations contact your local Ruminant Support Specialist



Spring Grass Management

The challenge this spring is to budget grass along with the remainder of available forage. There are a range of things to consider before making a decision on turnout date and finishing the first rotation.

- **Weather** is a critical factor. Don't sacrifice animal performance or paddocks if the weather is against you, this will only slow down your next grazing rotation.
- **Soil Type:** cold soils will take longer to reach the grass growth required to support herd demand, so think of your own farm when deciding on a spring strategy.
- **Consistency:** once grass is in the diet work your budget to try and keep it in the diet, just getting out for 3-4 hours is enough to get the benefits of grass. Don't

risk falling short of grass and affecting cows as they near peak yield.

- **Opening covers** are low in parts of our area this year, so it's worth walking the farm to see how much grass made it through the winter.
- **Transition** cows to grass slowly after calving. Grass is a high protein, highly digestible, energy rich feed; which is the complete opposite to average silage results, so transition slowly to avoid digestive upsets.
- **Budget** your grass every week or fortnight, and budget your silage on the same day. Some farms have very little fodder reserves so review stocks on your farm frequently.

PIP SPRING DAIRY CUBES

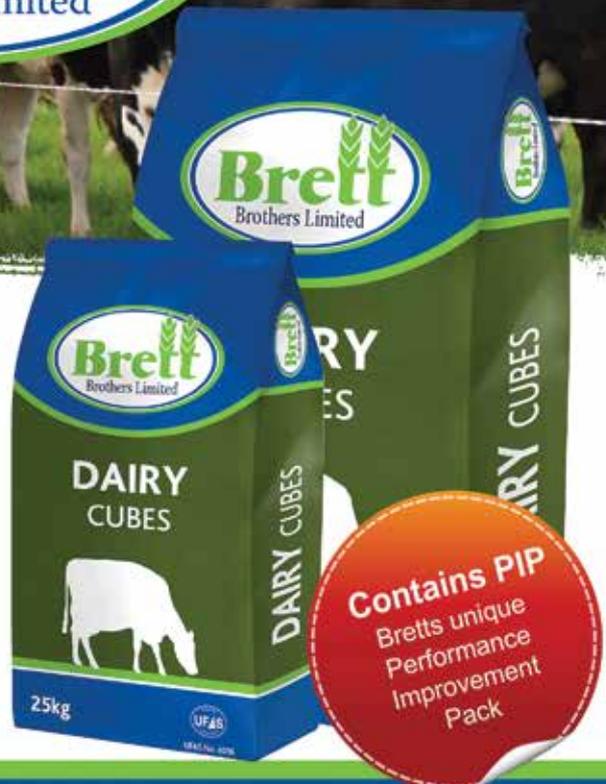
from



PIP Spring Dairy Cubes

are specifically formulated for spring calving dairy cows during the transition period from indoor feeding to grazing.

This 16% protein dairy feed is the perfect complement to spring grass. It offers **flexible feeding levels** and provides the full requirement of **protected minerals**.



Contact your Local Sales Representative or Tel: 056 7755300
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Web: www.brettbrothers.ie

PRODUCT FOCUS

Reviva

Reviva is a powder that is mixed in warm water to provide a post calving supplement to dairy cows. The drink is high in rapidly available energy, vitamins, minerals and calcium. The product is particularly useful for herds suffering issues with both clinical and sub-clinical milk fever which often present as retained afterbirths. Many of our clients now use this as a tool to prevent metabolic disease in cows that are deemed high risk for developing milk fever, ketosis and displaced abomasums. Examples are cows that have a history of milk fever, cows that calved twins or cows with a difficult calving. It is like 'Lucozade Sport' for cows.



Late Pregnancy Ewe Nutrition

Approximately 75% of foetal growth happens in the last 50 days in a ewes' pregnancy, leading to a massive increase in energy and protein demands. Mid-season pregnant ewes should be on a rising plane of nutrition with concentrate from now until lambing. The table below gives approximate feeding guidelines for ewes carrying twins. Lambs require 50 ml of colostrum per 1 kg of birth

weight in the first hour of life for successful transfer of immunity from the ewe. The quality of feed has a major influence on the yield and quality of colostrum and milk, which is why **Bretts' Supreme Ewe Cubes** contain high levels of barley and soya bean meal and are fortified with selenium and vitamin E.

Concentrate requirements with ad lib silage to unshorn twin bearing ewes (70 kg Live-weight).

Silage Quality	Weeks Pre-Lambing					Total (KG)
	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-3	2-0	
75 DMD			0.1 kg	0.4 kg	0.6 kg	15
70 DMD		0.1 kg	0.3 kg	0.5 kg	0.7 kg	20
65 DMD		0.1 kg	0.4 kg	0.6 kg	0.8 kg	25
60 DMD (Hay)	0.1 kg	0.3 kg	0.6 kg	0.8 kg	1.0 kg	40

- For triplets feed an extra 0.2 kg per head per day
- For singles feed 0.2 kg less per head per day

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