



Over the summer, many of our sales team attended the Moorepark Open Day and the Irish Grassland Association (IGA) Beef Conference. This month, our Ruminant Support Specialist, David Lawrence gives a synopsis of both events and key take home messages farmers can implement in their own businesses.

Moorepark Open Day 2019

Ireland has seen a very successful growth in dairy production since the abolition of milk quota and has exceeded the growth target set out in the "Food Harvest 2020" strategy. The dairy industry has grown by 54% in terms of volume output, and 64% in terms of total milk solids (P. Dillon, 2019). Although farmers have successfully transitioned to a "no quota" era of milk production, there are growing challenges and concerns facing all livestock production systems, which include climate change, public perception, water quality, sourcing labour and a growing global marketplace. The following five take home messages from the open day should be considered on farms to improve sustainability and profitability.

1. Breeding is fundamental to improving the efficiency of milk production. EBI is a successful tool to identify weak links and improve herd performance. Milk solids production (34%) and fertility/survivability (34%) make up over two thirds of the weighting for EBI. Focusing on these two points alone will improve milk solids yield per cow and the duration a cow remains in the herd, ultimately improving profitability. The figure quoted on the day was that every unit increase in EBI is worth €1.94 increase in profit per lactation (D. Berry, 2019).
2. Milk recording is under-utilised on Irish farms, both in terms of how many farms milk record (1 in 3 farms (ICBF, 2017)) and the decisions which are being made with milk records. Understanding where the underperforming/problem cows are within a herd will make breeding decisions more accurate and will improve the overall productivity of cows in the medium-long term.
3. Grass utilisation and fertiliser use are extremely important for profitable milk production and environmental sustainability. Using



top PPI varieties, such as Brett's' Gold Sward Extend, will insure more persistent sward vigour and improved production. Fertiliser planning is a key step in responsible fertiliser use, know your fields nutritional status by soil testing before deciding on its fertiliser requirement for the incoming growing season.

4. Using a lower protein concentrate at grass has a significant environmental impact. During the main grazing season, when grass accounts for the majority of a cow's intake there is no benefit to feeding high crude protein dairy nuts 18% +. That is why Bretts Maxi Breeder and range of grazing cubes are formulated for 14% crude protein and below. Bretts also include Crina and Acid Buff in their Maxi Breeder which, have been proven to further reduce N excretion and improve rumen efficiency.
5. Measuring time taken to do particular tasks and having a good idea of time required on an average working week will help you decide on the best places to invest in labour saving technologies and will ultimately determine the total number of cows your farm can stock comfortably.

Harvest and Silage Photo Competition

Don't forget to enter our competition for best 'silage' and 'harvest' photos for inclusion in our 2020 calendar. Email your entry to photos@brettbrothers.ie



IGA Beef Conference

The beef industry has been under a lot of pressure of late, due to global and national market pressure and now environmental pressure. The key to staying viable in the beef industry is to focus and improve on the efficiencies of production. Some of which, were outlined at the recent Irish Grassland Association (IGA) Beef Conference.

For suckler-beef farmers, the profitability is linked to efficiency and Aidan Murray of Teagasc, outlined results of the 2018 profit monitor data. This trend has been long established that the top 1/3 of suckler farmers are making profit, the middle breaking even and the bottom 1/3 are losing considerably. One of the key drivers in improving profitability on all beef systems is increasing annual kilos of beef sold per ha, with a focus on increasing output per livestock unit. Ultimately, this means increasing stocking rate and improving management and herd genetics. Key efficiency gains in suckler farming include pulling back the mean calving date, decreasing the calving interval, calving all heifers at 24 months and ultimately increasing calves per cow/year. Ken Graham's farm walk was a testament to the increase in efficiency as he is stocked at 2.3 LU/ha, with a calving interval of 380 days, 0.93 calves per cow per year and calving all his heifers at 22-26 months. As a result, he is producing almost 400kg of live weight per ha more than the national average, a 45% increase in output.



Iverk Show

We are delighted to invite all our customers to our marquee at the Iverk Show on Saturday, August 24th.



New Website

Have you seen our newly launched website? Visit www.brettbrothers.ie



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