



## DEALING WITH SUMMER DROUGHT

As this newsletter is being written, we cast our minds back to July 2018 when we experienced a serious drought and hope by the time you read this newsletter, there will have been some decent rainfall and the advice given can be filed away for future reference. To date we see soil moisture deficits largely impacting Kilkenny, Wexford, East Waterford, Laois and isolated places in Tipperary, however, it is very localised even within a parish. The most important piece of advice we can give is to walk your farm regularly, measure grass, keep an eye on the forecast and seek advice early.

- Soil moisture deficits have reached 60mm in some areas and are beginning to have a significant impact on grass growth. Prolonged periods of dry soil will result in limited grass availability, the degree of which will depend on stocking rate, soil and sward type and soil fertility.
- The positive news is that grass quality in terms of energy is good and in dry weather dry matter is high at 18% so cows are very content.
- While awaiting the required rainfall, start to stretch out the available grass covers that are suitable for grazing (>1000kg DM/ha) so grass remains in the diet.
- Try to postpone grazing covers <800 kg DM/ha as these will respond well to rainfall.
- Additional concentrate in the parlour is a simple way of reducing grass demand, 4-6 kg should be fed in the parlour to begin reducing grass demand, along with the best available silage.

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**One bale of silage fed to 40-45 cows is approximately 5 kg DM/head. Along with 6 kg of concentrate, this will reduce grass demand to 8 kg DM/cow/day which is half of her normal grass intake.**  
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- Areas of silage ground with lower covers (<2400 kg DM/ha) can be grazed or pre-mowed in place of bale silage, good utilisation is very important.
- Allocating grass for morning grazing and allocating silage on a sacrifice paddock or in the shed in the evening is a simple approach to rationing grass. Farms with a diet feeder can easily feed out a buffer feed in the field after grazing out in the morning.
- Ensure pit silage remains unopened until at least 4-6 weeks post ensilage to reach aerobic stability. If your farm has a low availability of baled silage consider using Bretts Grass Stretcher Ration, which is a high fibre, 15% protein ration that can be fed safely at higher volumes up to 6kg/head/day to complement parlour feeding and grass. Straights such as Palm Kernal and Soya Hulls can be considered but please seek advice from our technical team.
- Please ensure the parlour concentrate you are using is suitable for higher feeding levels, Bretts Maxi Breeder 14%, PIP Dairy 16% and Ultra Dairy 16% dairy cubes are all formulated for flexible feeding rates. However, if there are high levels of silage in the diet or additional low protein feeds the protein in the parlour feed may need to be increased to offset the loss of protein that is normally provided in grass.
- Please let your Technical Sales Rep know if you use additional minerals such as boluses or water minerals as it is important not to oversupply minerals.



## PRODUCT FOCUS

### Bretts Grass Stretcher Ration

Bretts Grass Stretcher Ration is carefully formulated to 'do what it says on the tin.' From previous experience we know that raw materials such as Soya Hulls, Palm Kernal, Wheatfeed and Rapeseed are safe to feed as an additional buffer feed alongside parlour feed and this will help to stretch the grass that is available on the farm. It is suitable for milking cows, maiden heifers, stores and weanlings over 6 months of age. For forward cattle we would recommend a cube or ration formulated for finishing cattle. **Grass Stretcher Ration** is a competitively priced 15% protein and is currently available to order in bulk, please contact your Bretts Sales Representative for further advice.



## WELCOME!

We would like to give a warm welcome to David Maddock who has recently joined our Technical Sales Team in Bretts. David hails from a suckler farm in south Kilkenny and graduated from WIT in 2007 with a degree in Agricultural Science. Having worked within the agricultural industry for the past twelve years David brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise in all farming areas. While respecting social distancing guidelines David looks forward to meeting clients over the coming months. David will be predominately covering our customer base in south Tipperary and will be working closely with our Ruminant Support Specialist, David Lawrence.



Our sales reps now have the facility to process card payments using a mobile payment terminal. We would like to encourage all our customers to please make use of this facility where possible.



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