



TAKE THE STRESS OUT OF WINTER HOUSING

Housing should enhance animal performance rather than hinder it. Are your animals performing as well as they should indoors? If the answer is no, often the housing environment is the problem. Below is a checklist to ensure you are not using additional feed energy to compensate for poor housing.

- **Ventilation** - the house should be full of clean dry air just like the outdoors. If there is a problem with ventilation you will notice black smut building up at the points of air energy and exit, excessive cobwebs, and wet floors or bedding.
- **Lying space** - we recommend one animal per cubicle, please see Table 1 for further recommendations.
- **Feed space** – this is the most common housing restriction we come upon. Where space is tighter, be sure all animals have continuous access to a diet that is consistent throughout the day as outlined in Table 1.
- **Additional space for bulling** - this is vital for autumn calved dairy and suckler cows, if accessible cows will express heats safely in a holding yard.
- **Dry and transition cows** - before and after calving each cow requires 10m² of straw bedding and individual calving pens require 15m² of straw bedding to minimise stress during calving.
- **Water troughs** - should be checked daily and cleaned out at least twice per week. One bowl will provide water for 10 cattle and an average sized water trough for 15-20 cattle. Where possible ensure two water points per animal group.
- **Vaccination and parasite** - controls need to be up to date.
- **Weigh animals** - after the third week of housing once they have settled into their environment and weigh regularly thereafter.

LYING AND FEEDING SPACE REQUIREMENTS FOR CATTLE

Stock Type	Weight (kg)	Lying Space Requirement (m ²)		Feeding Space Requirement (mm)	
		Slats	Bedding	Ad Libitum	Restricted
Cows	500 - 700	2.5 - 3.0	4.0 - 5.0	500 mm	700 mm
Finishers	>275 kg	2.0 - 2.5	3.5 - 4.0	500 mm	650 mm
Stores/weanlings	<275 kg	1.2 - 1.5	2.5 - 3.0	300 mm	500 mm

TABLE 1, SOURCE: TEAGASC



COVID-19 Update

We hope that you and your family are staying safe during these uncertain times and we want to thank you for your co-operation with new protocols we have implemented over the last 6 months. Due to the Level 5 framework, as set out by the Department of the Taoiseach, our sales team are restricting visits on farm. However, if you require technical assistance please contact your Bretts sales representative. We also ask where possible please make payment over the phone, by online transfer or by posting cheques.

MANAGE YOUR SILAGE QUALITY AND BUDGET

Quality - with most silage pits opened we recommend to test silage now to assist with making informed decisions on concentrate feeding requirements. If silage is being fed to dry cows, it is advisable to request a mineral analysis on the silage to avoid problems such as milk fever, retained cleanings and stillborn calves, all of which are preventable with targeted mineral nutrition.

Budget Silage - Plan for the worst-case scenario of a late spring and having to feed silage for the next 5 months (early November to end of March). If you require assistance to calculate a fodder budget, please contact your Bretts sales representative.

Rough Rule of Thumb to Calculate tons of silage in the pit
Measure your grass silage pit in feet and multiply the length x breadth x height to give you volume in cubic feet and divide this by 50 to give you an estimate of tons of fresh silage.

What to Feed Weanlings and Beef Cattle?

Farmers will always ask the question what to feed and how much to feed, but it really does depend on silage quality and the target livestock. Silage of 60% DMD will only maintain weight for weanlings, while silage of 72% DMD will give approximately 0.4 kgs of weight gain per day, over half of the daily target. Below is a recommended product and feeding level guide, depending on silage quality and animal type.

PRODUCT AND FEEDING LEVEL GUIDE DEPENDING ON SILAGE QUALITY AND ANIMAL TYPE

Silage Quality	Recommended Bretts Feed	72% DMD	68% DMD	64% DMD
Weanlings and store cattle	Heifer Rearer or Weanling Cube 18% Surethrive Cubes 16% Beef Crunch 16%	1.0kg	2.0kg	3.0kg
Finishing Steers/heifers (depends on breed, carcass spec required)	Eurobeef Cubes 15% Beef Elite Cubes 14% Beef Crunch 16% Coarse Beef 14%	5.0kg	6.0kg	7.5kg
Finishing Bulls	Beef Elite 14% Coarse Beef 14% Bull Beef Ration 12%	7.5kg	Ad Libitum	Ad Libitum



PRODUCT FOCUS

Dry Cow Minerals are crucial to ensure that pregnant cows get the appropriate mineral and nutritional components for a successful calving and stress-free start to lactation.



Bretts PIP Dry Cow Minerals are specifically formulated to meet the requirements of the dry cow, taking into consideration that Irish silages are generally high in potassium and low in trace minerals. The incidence of problems such as retained afterbirth, milk fever, stillborn calves can be reduced greatly with good dry cow management. We suggest feeding minerals twice per day or include as part of a diet feeder ration. For a Dry Cow Management brochure please visit our website www.brettbrothers.ie or contact your Bretts sales representative.



Feed Protein Nitrates Report

As requested by the Department of Agriculture, Nitrates Derogation farmers are required to submit records of crude protein in concentrate feeds, fed to all animals over 2 years of age from 1st April-15th September 2020. To assist our customers with this process, Brett Brothers have created a customised report entitled 'Feed Protein Nitrates Report' which is available from our office.

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