



Grass Dry Matter (DM)

Grass DM is hugely variable and totally dependent on the weather. In April grass DM was in the range of 18-20%. When rainfall escalated in early May, Grass DM dropped to below 15% for several grazing days. Our advice is to consider the weather and grazing conditions daily and make decisions based on realistic DM results. Overestimating grass DM or daily intake can have detrimental effects in terms of energy intake and performance of livestock.

GRASS WATCH NEWS

Over the last number of years, Brett's have partnered with Trouw Nutrition Ireland as a participant in Grass Watch. We have a specific Brett's Monitor Farm supplying a weekly grass sample, grassland management data and milk performance. This information is fed into a database with 14 other dairy farms in the Republic of Ireland and the aim is to create useful reports. If you would like to receive this **Grass Watch Report** on a regular basis, please email grasswatch@brettbrothers.ie

Grass results show the average of all the farms participating in the programme. The weather in 2021 has been extremely variable and in recent weeks poor grass growth and wet weather has changed the nutritional profile of grass. Some farmers are reporting massive variation in milk urea levels and this is linked to the cold, dry weather in April where there was little growth and uptake of nitrogen. As a result, crude protein levels in grass are lower than normal for this time of year. Using the Grass Watch results, we can accurately predict the milk yield that will be supported by various grass Dry Matter Intake (DMI) and this allows us to give clear feeding guidelines depending on expected milk yield.

Energy and Protein Trends

Our **Grass Watch** report shows that energy (ME) levels in grass were above average for April. This combined with high grass DM explains why cows were holding milk yield, as well as youngstock and beef animals doing extremely well after turnout. During April crude protein levels in grass dropped significantly and can be explained by the dry, cold weather affecting nitrogen uptake and grass growth. At present ME levels are low and sward quality is poor. Warmer temperatures are required to increase grass growth and nitrogen uptake in the soil which will lead to a rapid increase in grass proteins. The challenge for June will be to manage and maintain sward quality.

How Much Milk will Grass Support?

In Brett's we have been sampling grass throughout the season and the average grass results for late May indicate that 14 kgs DM of grass will support 16 litres but this can vary depending on weather, grazing conditions, age of the sward and quality of grass.

Grass DMI (kgs DM/cow/day)	Milk yield (litres) supported from grass alone	Supplementation required per cow per day to support yield depending on varying grass DMI		
		22 Litres	26 Litres	30 Litres
14 kgs	16	3.1	5.1	7.2
16 kgs	20	1.0	3.1	5.0

Maintaining Grass Quality

The aim for livestock farmers is to maintain grass quality during the peak grazing period. Topping, pre-mowing and baling will assist towards improving sward quality on subsequent grazing. Where growth is good, maintain an 18 – 21-day rotation, with pre-grazing covers no stronger than 1600 kg DM/ha. Increasing concentrate feeding rates can make up for the energy loss of poor-quality grass and helps to maintain milk production or consistent liveweight gain with calves and beef animals.



A Tricky Time for Calves

The recent cold, wet weather has really added to the stress levels on all livestock but especially calves. The transition of a newly weaned calf from an indoor environment of a dry, fresh bed with a supply of straw or hay to an outdoor environment of lush, leafy grass and dealing with the outdoor elements is often a challenge. If a young animal is stressed their immune system is adversely affected and this can lead to increased incidences of clinical sickness such as scours and pneumonia. Stressed calves are very prone to Coccidiosis and if your farm has a history, discuss a plan with your vet to get ahead of the problem. Brett's have a range of natural feed additives that can help reduce the risk of Coccidiosis, however we recommend that veterinary advice is sought when clinical cases present.

Feeding calves at the same time every day is a useful way of checking for the onset of any illness. Our advice is to offer additional roughage if the grass is very leafy. Young calves can also suffer the effects of acidosis and it is important to choose a feed that includes feed additives to help with prevention.



Brett's Calf EXTRA Health Package



Ask your Brett's Sales Representative about our Calf EXTRA Health Package which can be included in Brett's Ultra Calf Cubes. This unique Calf EXTRA Health Package has been formulated using a blend of feed additives to improve the performance of calves at grass. Brett's Ultra Calf Cubes contain PulmoCX, a feed additive that helps to reduce the risk of Coccidiosis and boost the natural immunity of calves. From April to June, this feed is growing in popularity when calves are most prone to developing health issues.

Retirement Wishes to Matt

We would like to congratulate Matt Gartland on his retirement after 20 years with Brett's. Matt has been instrumental in providing the highest standard of agronomy services to our customers and we thank him for his professionalism, dedication, and commitment to both his customers and Brett's. Matt is very much respected by his colleagues and clients alike and his presence will certainly be missed. Matt has spent the last number of months working with Paul Colgan, who will be taking over his customer base.



Pictured; Michael Foley and Matt Gartland of Brett Brothers.

Finally, we would like to wish Matt and his wife Mary a happy, healthy and fulfilling retirement.

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