



### ST. PATRICKS BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND



The spring months are the busiest time for feed deliveries and bagged inputs such as fertiliser, seed, milk replacer and sprays. With delivery schedules and supply chains tight for all inputs, the longer lead-time that we have on all orders, will allow for more efficient customer delivery schedules.

This year St. Patrick's Day falls on Thursday the 17th, and with **Friday 18th March also being a Bank Holiday**, makes this an extra-long weekend. We ask that you please take note of these dates and order early to allow our team to plan the logistics of production and deliveries. Active customers for feed with a correct mobile number in our accounts system will receive a text message on approach to busy holiday periods and we would ask for everyone to respond to such reminders in order to avoid disappointment. If you do not currently receive a text, please contact the office 056 7755300 or inform your Sales Rep.



### Dairy Matters for March

After a great start to grazing in early February, the last few weeks brought a change with wintery showers and a lot of rain which has led to challenging grazing conditions and an increased reliance on silage. It is critical to have enough silage for the remaining housed period, so early March is a good time to take stock of forage supplies and demand.

It is important to avoid making rash decisions that will have long term consequences on animal performance, and for dairy cows, we must protect milk solids and subsequent fertility in the lead up to the breeding season. Let's hope that March does not live up to the name of a month of many weathers and that a more settled period lies ahead.



### Walter (Wally) Murphy – A tribute to our friend and colleague



The early days of February brought the awful news from Portlaoigh of Wally Murphy's tragic and untimely death. Wally was a familiar face in Bretts and many of our customers would have known Wally for his involvement with harvest, spreading of bulk fertiliser and he was often seen on the lorry or tractor unit delivering feed across all counties. Wally was a pleasure to do business with, nothing was ever too much trouble and he was always smiling and had time for everyone while doing his work so efficiently. Wally will be sorely missed by his colleagues in Brett's.

The management and staff in Brett Brothers would like to express our condolences to the entire Murphy family and we especially think of Wally's parents, John and Catherine, and siblings Elaine and James as they grieve the death of their beloved son and brother. May his gentle soul rest in peace.

*Slan abhaile Wally, Guimid rath De ar d'anam dhilis*



## Body Condition Loss

The key to good fertility in dairy herds is to minimise the loss of body condition in the first six weeks of lactation. This year, our technical team are noting that many herds are experiencing a rapid loss of body condition and are concerned about the subsequent fall out in terms of fertility. Our Nutritionist, Heather Peppard, is adamant that many cows are being underfed due to the overestimation of grass intakes and inadequate supplementation rates in the parlour relative to milk yield.

The aim is to optimise milk yield and milk solids from grass, while understanding that grass alone cannot supply sufficient energy in early lactation. Good quality silage is very important to maintain energy and dry matter (DM) intake. Concentrate feed levels should remain flexible and will depend on silage quality, grazing conditions, grass availability, cow body condition and milking ability.



## What and how much to feed?

The average protein in the total diet including grass, silage, straw and parlour feed should be at least 16%. On silage only, feed a minimum of an 18% dairy nut, such as Milkwell or Milk Max. Grass is a high protein feed (over 20% protein) and when included in the total diet, choose from Brett's 16% protein range. These cubes have flexible feeding rates to supply enough Cal-mag and minerals at lower feeding rates, while allowing you to increase parlour feeding levels when grazing conditions are poor.

### RECOMMENDED CONCENTRATE SUPPLEMENTATION DEPENDING ON FORAGE TYPE AND SUPPLY

Forage Available	Parlour Feed Recommended	Milk Yield		
		22 Litres	26 Litres	30 Litres
<b>Indoors full time on 70% DMD silage with no or limited grazing</b>	Milkwell 18% Milk Max 18%	6.5kg	7.5kg	8.5kg
<b>Grass by day (6 kg DM) with adlib silage by night</b>	PIP Spring 16% Ultra Dairy 16%	5.0kg	6.0kg	7.0kg

This table gives an approximate guideline, for detailed recommendations contact your Brett's Ruminant Support Specialist



## Checklist for Milk Protein

Spring calving herds always see a dip in milk protein % in March as milk yield is increasing daily, which naturally has a dilution effect on milk protein %. In recent years, we see the protein drop in the bulk tank more pronounced and this may be due to more compact calvings. If milk proteins are falling sharply or are already less than 3.1% consider the following:

- Ask your Brett's Ruminant Support Specialist to assess daily total DM intake relative to milk yield as energy deficiency is the main cause of low milk protein %.
- Review total dietary protein - a shortage of protein due to little or no grass in the diet means cows cannot make milk protein.
- Check the calibration of parlour feeders as a difference of 0.5kg in two feeds is 1kg.
- In poor and wet grazing conditions, the utilisation of grass declines by 2kg DM so increase parlour feeding or offer silage as an additional energy source on very wet days.
- Check ratio of milk fat % to protein %. Fat % should not exceed 1.4:1, as this can indicate the cows are 'milking off their back' to fuel milk production.

Brett Brothers Ltd.,  
Callan, Co. Kilkenny  
Tel: 056 7755300

Brett Brothers Ltd.,  
Windgap, Co. Kilkenny  
Tel: 051 648204

Brett Brothers Ltd.,  
Ardfinnan, Co. Tipperary  
Tel: 052 7466208

Brett Brothers Ltd.,  
Portlaw, Co. Waterford  
Tel: 051 387396