



## HARVEST 2022

The harvest will commence this month and our Agronomy Team report that crops look very promising in terms of yield and quality. In these uncertain times of food security, the news of a potential bumper crop on our own Irish soil is very welcome. All we need now is good weather for harvesting! We wish all our cereal growers a safe and successful harvest.

## The challenges of changing weather patterns

Not long ago we used to dread a 'wet summer' and having to contend with challenging grazing conditions. Now we seem to face more prolonged dry spells in the summer months. Thankfully the rain that arrived in recent days means that grassland farmers are no longer facing a potential drought situation. Farmers need to plan to have a buffer stock of good quality forage available for the summer months.

In times of grass shortages, we have the following advice:

- Walk your farm regularly, measure grass, watch the forecast, seek advice and intervene early.
- Stretch out the available grass covers that are suitable for grazing (>1000 kg DM/ha), so grass remains in the diet for as long as possible.
- Try to postpone grazing covers <800 kg DM/ha as these will respond well when the rain comes.
- Offer good quality silage as a simple way of reducing grass demand. One bale of silage fed to 40 cattle or cows is approximately 5 kg DM of forage/head.
- Dairy farmers should ensure that the feeding rates of concentrates in the parlour are flexible and increase feed levels up to 6 kg to reduce grass demand.
- Water is the most critical nutrient required by all animals, especially milking cows. In very dry weather water supply must be checked and if limited, additional water provisions need to be made.

## Monitor Milk Yield

This year many dairy farms reported a drop in daily milk yield compared to 2021. With current milk prices at an all-time high and even taking into consideration the increase in variable and fixed costs it is still important to try and minimise the milk drop so that you can take advantage of the milk price towards the end of lactation. We are now mid-season in a spring calving herd and a milk yield decline of 2.5% per week after peak milk yield is normal. So, if milk yield on July 1st is 25 litres, then a drop of 0.62 litres over the course of a week is to be expected.

If your decline is higher, it is worth investigating further. It could be a drop in energy intake or insufficient dietary protein, a viral disease or something as simple as inadequate water supply on very hot days. In many cases it is due to a reduction in total energy intake, either due to insufficient dry matter intake or a reduction in forage quality. If grass quality has reduced or there is a drop in grass dry matter intake, the energy gap will have to be filled with good quality grass or maize silage or parlour supplementation needs to be increased.

At present our **GrassWatch** report is showing that an intake of 15 kgs DM of good quality grass is supporting 18 litres of milk. A herd yielding 26 litres will require 4 kgs of supplement in the form of dairy cubes or ration.

## WHY RESEED?

High fertiliser and fuel prices are proving to be a huge challenge to reseeding in 2022, however, it is more important to remember that grass is the cheapest source of feed available to livestock farmers. Our advice is continue with a reseeding plan and target poor performing paddocks to optimise the productivity of your grassland.

### Benefits of Reseeding:

- Higher grass production, especially in the critical shoulders of the grazing season, spring and autumn
- Reseeded pasture is up to 25% more responsive to available nutrients such as nitrogen compared to an old pasture
- Reduced weed infestation in reseeded pastures, for example in a field that has a 10% dock infestation there will be 10% less available grass
- Improved silage quality leading to improved animal performance in terms of live weight gain or milk yield

## Advice for Reseeding

Pat Delaney and Seamus Whitty are two of our Technical Sales Representatives and they have the following advice for those that are reseeding:

- Target poor performing paddocks and those with a high level of weed infestation
- Soil test fields for pH, P and K indexes and apply fertiliser accordingly (Eg 3 bags of 10:10:20) and 2 tonne of lime/acre
- Ensure correct rate of glyphosate and allow sufficient time for the sod to break down especially when min-till or stitching methods are being used
- Choose the right grass seed mixture for your system and soil type
- Roll the seedbed to ensure that it is firm and there is good seed to soil contact
- Careful attention for the new grass seedlings should be considered for slug and weed control
- Spray weeds at seedling stage to ensure a clean pasture. Consider clover safe vs non clover safe products depending on the weed burden
- Graze with young stock to encourage tillering and do not cut silage from a reseeded paddock in the first season to avoid an open sward



## A picture that speaks a thousand words!

This photo clearly shows the difference between a post emergence spray and an area that was missed by the sprayer operator.



## Brett's Grass Seed Range:



**Gold Sward Extend** is a high-quality grass seed mixture with equal inclusions of tetraploids and diploids and 1 kg of clover. The mixture includes Abergain with excellent autumn growth and Aberchoice which is the top late heading diploid on the Pasture Profit Index (PPI). Gold Sward Extend is ideal for an intensive grassland farmer focusing on vigorous growth and high sward quality.



**Gold Sward** is an intensive cut and graze seed mixture, made up of 40% tetraploid and 60% diploid with 1 kg of white clover. Varieties included are Gracehill which has excellent yield and Drumbo is well proven on farm with exceptional quality and good ground cover. Gold Sward is ideal for pasture that is sown for more challenging conditions, heavier land, or multiple silage cuts.

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.,  
Portlawn, Co. Waterford  
Tel: 051 387396