



ABP Demonstration Farm Open Day

ABP recently hosted an open day for farmers participating in the Advantage Beef Programme on their calf to beef demonstration farm in Tullow, Co. Carlow. Stephen Connolly, Agri. Sustainability Manager for ABP, welcomed visitors to the farm of Michael and James Sheppard. Bretts technical team, Dr. David Lawrence and Heather Peppard, were invited to give technical presentations on the day, with a focus on improving the economic and environmental sustainability on livestock farms, with particular emphasis on improved genetics and farm management practices. We have summarised some of the key take home messages from the open day.

Reducing carbon footprint and increasing carcass value with improved genetic merit

Stephen Connolly looks after the genetic evaluation programme within ABP and as part of a demonstration he choose to weigh two Angus heifers of the same age. The difference in weight was staggering, even though their rearing on the farm was the exact same. Animals of higher genetic merit have better feed efficiency, they are younger at slaughter with a heavier carcass and ultimately reduce the carbon footprint of the beef herd. On the farm, within the same breed, there was a difference of 46 kgs in carcass weight, at the same slaughter age, which is approximately €200 in monetary terms.

Optimise soil pH to save on fertiliser costs

Amie Coonan, Farm Liaison Officer with ABP, highlighted that 50% of all beef farms have a pH below the target of 6.3-6.5. She reminded farmers that it is essential to soil test every 3-4 years and to use the results correctly, especially with high fertiliser costs. Focus on soil pH and lime requirements as fertiliser will not work efficiently if pH is below optimum.

Summer Scour Syndrome in calves at grass

David Lawrence, advised that a slow transitioning of calves over a 4 week period from an indoor diet to grazing full time reduced the risk of digestive upsets. On turn out to grass continue to feed the same diet that was offered indoors and only begin to reduce feed levels after 4 weeks. David advised on offering straw and demonstrated his ingenious idea of using a re-cycled IBC tank to keep straw fresh and dry (as shown in the picture below). The farm hosts, James and Michael Sheppard, adopted this practice in recent years as recommended by David, and have seen a noticeable improvement in calf health and thrive with less 'sick calves with summer scour.'





The use of red clover silage in winter diets

Last winter Sean Walsh, ABP ran a trial on the farm with advice from David Lawrence to show that high protein, Red Clover silage grown on the farm can replace grass silage. The use of Red Clover silage allowed for the crude protein in the ration to be reduced from 18% to 12% protein. Fodder beet and straw were included in both diets. Red Clover silage may have merit in diets to reduce protein levels and cost in the winter ration, while also reducing Carbon Footprint.

Plan for winter feed by doing a fodder budget and analyse silage

Heather Peppard highlighted the importance of a fodder budget and to take consideration of the recent dry spell impacting on grass growth and silage yields. Silage must be tested to get an accurate feed plan in place. She also warned against skimping on minerals offered to beef animals, as calcium and buffers help maintain rumen pH which improves feed efficiency and phosphorus is needed for young growing animals.



Looking after yourself

Paul Mathews, Group Livestock Manager at ABP, highlighted the importance of farmers getting back to farm walks as farming can be lonesome. There was particular emphasis on Farm Safety and after a safety talk visitors got an opportunity to socialise over a lovely cup of tea and roast beef sandwich!



Grass Stretcher Ration

is formulated to help fill the nutritional gap where grass supply is limited. With many livestock farms experiencing poor grass growth, the aim is to extend the existing grass rotation and limit the amount of silage being consumed out of the winter silage budget. Grass Stretcher Ration is available at a competitive price, contact your Bretts Sales Representative for advice on feeding guidelines.

10 tons of Grass Stretcher Ration will replace 8800 kgs Dry Matter (DM) of Grass. If cows are consuming 12 kgs DM of grass per day this saving in grass is enough to feed 100 cows for 7 days.

Iverk Show

It was great to get back to Iverk Show and meet with customers after a 3-year break.



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