



## HARVEST 2023

The harvest will commence this month and our Agronomy Team report that the recent rain has given a welcome boost to the growing crops with benefits to yield potential. All we need now is good weather for harvesting! We wish all our cereal growers a safe and successful harvest.

As many will have read, the Government has established ambitious targets to expand the Tillage Sector over the coming years. We welcome this and are happy to have inputted into some of the Stakeholder Groups striving to achieve these targets.

Jimmy Brett and our Agronomist James Irish, recently attended the Tillage Industries Ireland conference where Minister for Agriculture Charlie McConalogue was the keynote speaker. It is encouraging for the tillage industry to see Minister McConalogue so interested and engaged in the discussions.

Meanwhile, James Irish was recently appointed as the Vice President of the Irish Seed Trade Association (ISTA). Best wishes to James, whose voluntary involvement in this role is much appreciated.



*Tim O'Donovan, President of ISTA and Agronomist James Irish pictured at the Tillage Industries Ireland conference with Minister Charlie McConalogue.*



## Grass Watch and Milk Urea Nitrogen Levels

The grass situation across the region varies greatly with grass supplies remaining tight on many farms. Milk urea levels have also been lower than normal this year which can be attributed to a number of factors.

With poor grass growth caused by a lack of moisture, it meant that the plant hasn't been able to use the Nitrogen (N) in the ground. This led to lower grass proteins and therefore lower milk urea levels.

Also, the wet spring delayed fertiliser application so a lot of paddocks have received less N than normal. This in turn means lower than normal reserves of N in the ground which can reduce grass proteins, milk protein and milk urea.

A lot of farms had to supplement with silage in order to fill the grass deficit. Feeding silage can reduce the overall protein in the diet and may lead to lower than normal milk urea. In order to address this problem, talk to your Technical Sales Representative. Remember you can feed higher than a 15% protein nut/ration to dairy cows if feeding forages other than grass.

Grass quality has also been hard to manage this year, as many farmers had to graze higher than normal covers to keep some sort of grass in the diet.

These high covers of grass have a lot of stem and therefore fibre. This means the grass has lower energy and protein which can effect milk yield and milk solid percentages.



## Lameness in Dairy and Beef Herds

Lameness can be a big cost to farmers in both the treatment of animals and due to their reduced output. Recently, some of our Technical Team attended a training day about lameness in herds, with the main factors for lameness identified as follows:

- White line disease
- Sole ulcers
- Sole bruising
- Digital dermatitis

Farmers can help reduce the incidence of lameness in the herd by early detection and prompt effective treatment. Try to identify the cows that have to be treated and keep up to date records as problem and persistent cows may need to be culled.

**Hygiene:** Make sure that cows are not standing in animal dung/manure for long periods. Bacteria can enter the skin through a cut near the hoof and cause digital dermatitis. Having automatic scrapers and clean housing can reduce this risk.

**Nutrition:** Body Condition Score (BCS) cows and identify thin cows or cows losing fat reserves quickly. Cows have a layer of fat or cushion above the hoof. If they lose condition and have poor BCS, the protective layer can become thin and increase the incidence of lameness.

Ensure adequate energy supply in the diet and make sure cows have proper feed space at the barrier to prevent bullying. Biotin supplement included in the dry cow diet and the dairy ration can improve the 'glue' in the hoof and help make it stronger. It needs to be included in the diet for at least four months to have an effect. Other minerals such as zinc can also help with hoof hardness.

Other matters to note with nutrition include the importance of having a balanced diet and to ensure that cows don't suffer from acidosis or that dungs become too loose. Brett's range of PIP minerals



available in our dairy feed and farm minerals do include biotin and protected zinc.

**Environment:** Try to reduce standing times of cows before and after milking. Longer standing times lead to pressure on the animals' hooves. An increase in herd size can result in cows having to walk further distances between the grazing platform and parlour. Reduce incidence of lameness by having properly sloped roadways that have a smooth finish and no rough stones to injure or cause sole bruising.

Cows must be allowed to walk at their own pace so it's important not to rush them when using dogs or quad bikes. Try to ensure cow comfort during the winter with proper cubicle housing so cows can reduce standing time. Concrete grooving can also help in slippery yards where cows struggle to get a grip.

**Footbaths:** Remember that footbaths are a management strategy rather than a treatment. Make sure that products used are mixed at the proper concentration and the footbath is at least 2.5 metres long so all four hooves have adequate contact time with the product. Footbaths need to be conducted routinely to make any significant difference.



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

