

A time for reflection and improved efficiencies

There has been a lot of 'doom and gloom' within the agricultural sector in recent months. Excessive rainfall since early July has led to a very challenging time for tillage and livestock farmers.

The Harvest period here in Bretts spanned an 11-week period with high field losses of grain and straw. As November commences it feels that the winter is in with almost all livestock fully housed due to flooding and dreadful grazing conditions.

The Irish farmer is well used to dealing with the woes of the weather and fluctuating farm gate prices. In addition, there are policy changes and labour shortages on farm that are bringing further challenges for all farming enterprises. Changes to slurry/fertiliser regulations, stocking rates brought about by Banding in the dairy sector, the level of Organic Nitrogen being reduced for the majority of Derogation farms to 220 kgs/Ha means that 2024 will bring change.

Every farmer needs to assess their own situation so we encourage everyone to discuss this with experts and to seek advice before making big decisions. The most important thing is to talk and not to feel alone in making these decisions.

There are still a lot of things that can be done within the farm gate to improve efficiencies and to make sure that your business operation remains viable. Please speak to our team of Technical Advisors regarding your own enterprise.



Beef Farm Walk round-up

On Friday, October 20th, Jimmy and Anne-Marie Madigan in Ballyhale, County Kilkenny, kindly hosted a Teagasc Beef Farm Walk. Due to the extreme weather, all animals were housed so the event was held indoors but there was great discussion and some key messages from the event that apply to all livestock farms.

- Space allowance in pens for weanlings and finishing cattle is extremely important. Teagasc research has shown that the space allowance of 3m² versus 2m² gave a gain of an extra 40 kgs liveweight (at least 20 kgs carcass) over a 109 day finishing period as shown in the below table.

Results from a trial in Teagasc, Grange demonstrated the importance of not overstocking finishing animals

Space allowance	Starting Weight	Slaughter Weight	Liveweight Gain	ADG
2.0 m ²	590 Kg	665 Kg	75 Kg	0.69 kg
2.5 m ²	590 Kg	688 Kg	98 Kg	0.90 kg
3.0 m ²	590 Kg	705 Kg	115 Kg	1.05 kg

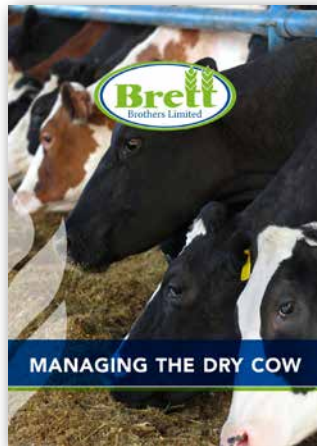
- Silage quality on Jimmy's farm is excellent and contributes to improved efficiency by increasing the daily weight gain, reducing feed bills and reducing days to slaughter for finishing cattle.
- The veterinary advice on the day was that with the wet weather there will be a bigger burden of Liver Fluke. Seek veterinary advice for control of parasites and do dung samples.
- Ventilation in the main finishing shed is a concern and Jimmy has all doors and vents open to improve air circulation.

The figures from Madigan's farm are impressive with the Bulls stocked at 9 bulls per 27 m², they are getting 8 kgs of Bretts Beef Elite which is split fed morning and evening (4 kgs in each feed) and offered 73% DMD silage ad lib. Jimmy reported that the bulls are currently gaining 2 kgs/day. Quote of the day from Jimmy Madigan who said: "We have nothing fancy here. We've good genetics, top quality silage, a meal bin and a Massey 365 with a transport box." The main take home message from the day was to do the important things well and keep the system simple.



Minerals for the Dry Cow

The aim of the Dry Cow period is to manage the cow in order to produce a healthy calf, prevent milk fever and associated metabolic disorders around the time of calving and to set the cow up for her next lactation and reproductive cycle. Management of Body Condition Score is critical during the dry period.



An effective dry cow mineral should be balanced for vitamins, macro and trace minerals. Minerals can be fed through a diet feeder or fed twice per day on top of silage for a minimum of eight weeks before calving.

Many of the technical calls that Bretts Ruminant Support Team deal with at calving are often linked to retained afterbirth, milk fever or weak calves. In many cases inadequate mineral supplementation is the issue and may be due to tight feed space; inaccurate weighing of minerals or minerals not being fed for the recommended eight weeks.

For further information please request a copy of our Dry Cow Management brochure available from the office or via our website.



Welcome to Patrick Foley



We would like to give a warm welcome to Patrick Foley who has recently joined our Technical Sales Team in Bretts. Patrick is an experienced young man who previously worked with us in our Callan Mill as part of his Professional Work Placement while completing his degree in Agriculture at Waterford IT.

Patrick is from a dairy farm in Callan and has previously managed an intensive dairy farm and has been involved in contracting service to local farms. He brings a wealth of practical experience to our team with his knowledge of livestock and grassland farming. Patrick will be predominately covering our customer base in Laois and the south midlands area and will be working closely with our Ruminant Support Specialist, David Lawrence. Patrick can be contacted on 087 2127445.



Dry Cow Minerals special offer

Bretts PIP Dry Cow Minerals are now available to order. For any full pallet order, there is a special offer of two bags free. Contact the office or your Technical Sales Rep for further information on the specifications and prices.

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