



NEW YEAR GREETINGS!

As we enter a New Year, we would like to wish all our customers and their families a healthy and successful 2024. The past 12 months will be widely remembered for the poor weather, with extreme rainfall in the summer and autumn causing awful conditions for harvesting of crops and winter sowing.

Grassland farmers faced challenging grazing conditions and an early start to the winter with the housing of stock in early October. Pig farmers have suffered in the later months of 2023 with seven price drops since September. Hopefully, 2024 will bring some improvements in weather and the farm gate prices look more promising for milk and the red meat sector.

Dry Cow Management

January is a crucial month for Spring Calving Dairy Cows and the aim 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. Take time to walk through your cows and assess Body Condition Score of the herd and deal with any issues promptly. It is always good to get a second opinion so if any of our team are in your yard ask them to have a look at the dry cows.

TOP TIP

Cross check that you are feeding the correct amount of Dry Cow Minerals, feed them twice per day on top of silage if it is not included in a diet feeder mix. With silages heavily contaminated with soil we recommend increasing the level of dry cow minerals up to 150 g/head/day to overcome high levels of aluminium and iron.



Get Ready for Calf Rearing

It is the time of year to get ready for the imminent calving season and use January to pay attention to the Calf Rearing facilities. It sounds basic but cleaning and disinfecting the calving sheds and calf rearing facilities and sterilising calf feeding equipment is time well spent in the fight to boost calf immunity. Order essential supplies of veterinary medicines and milk replacer that may be needed during the calving season. If you have an automated milk feeder, please clean it and make sure it is fully functioning.

Checklist for automated calf feeders

- Check water supply is switched on and that pressure is adequate for the feeder
- Check water hardness – less than 50 PPM, as this can reduce the efficacy of the detergent and it is always useful to do a check on water quality
- Thoroughly clean out the water header
- Ensure hopper is emptied of old milk replacer and cleaned
- Arrange for machine to be serviced
- Have replacement teats in stock

SPECIAL OFFER

Two Free Bags on every full Pallet (60 bags/1.2 tons) of Goldstart Milk Replacer ordered

Get a Free Goldstart Bretts Bodywarmer for every customer that orders a full pallet



Tillage Roundup

After a difficult harvest, the Autumn of 2023 came with a range of challenges that tested the resilience of the tillage farmer in every manner.

Planting of Winter Wheat and Barley continued up until the end of November with 60% of Autumn 2022 acres in the ground. Winter oats are at similar percentages with up to 60% of 2022 acreage also sown.

The tough harvest of 2023 has brought forward difficulties in spring seed availability, with the industry experiencing a 40% shortfall in seed supply for the coming planting season. As Ireland was not alone in its range of weather events in 2023, the importation of seed from the UK and Europe also proved a challenge.

Current field conditions are challenging but if seed beds and weather conditions allow, Winter seed could potentially be sown later in the month. Oil seed rape is also seeing a reduction of 25% from last year.

Beans delivered good yields and margin for growers last year. The protein payment is available again for 2024 and with no Nitrogen required they remain a very attractive option for growers. Beans can be sown from early February to April. However, only similar quantities of seed to last year will be available.

Spring oats are also a very dependable crop and provide good returns year on year. Oats can also be sown from February to April. Allow up to 4-5 weeks to burn off any grass leys that you are planning on taking out for tillage this year, and make sure any new ground is soil tested before applications of slurry begin later this month.

The Agronomy team at Bretts is working closely with growers to plan for the season ahead. If you are planning on sowing crops this Spring, please get in touch as soon as possible to avoid the disappointment of seed shortages.

Farewell Wishes to James



We are extremely sorry to announce that James Irish, our Senior Agronomist, is leaving us for pastures new. James joined Bretts 10 years ago and since then he has passionately led our Agronomy Team.

James has a unique skill for adopting new findings in plant breeding and chemistry and bringing them from research trial plots to farm level in order to improve productivity for cereal growers.

We know that James will be sorely missed by our tillage farmers and his departure will leave a void within Bretts where he was loved by all of his work colleagues. We want to thank James for his enthusiasm and work commitment over the past 10 years and wish him all the best in his future career as he takes up the position of Agronomy Manager with BASF.

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