



Harvest 2026 Update

July 2026 will be remembered as the driest harvest on record. The sunny days provided endless harvesting opportunities. The Winter Barley harvest is now complete with low to average moisture levels and excellent grain quality. The Oilseed Rape and Winter Oats have been harvested in great conditions while the harvesting of Winter Wheat and Spring Barley is so far going well.

We are delighted with the quality of grain coming over the weighbridge and into the yard which will be incorporated into our animal feed in the coming weeks.



Iverk Show – Save the Date

All roads lead to the Iverk Show in Piltown on Saturday, August 22nd. Founded in 1826, Iverk is Ireland's oldest Agricultural Show with this year being their 200th Year Anniversary Show. We are excited to attend this year's show to celebrate this significant milestone. Make sure to call to our stand on the day.



Ballyvadin Dairy Calf to Beef Open Day

Take home messages from the Dairy Calf-to-Beef Walk at Ballyvadin Farm, Co. Tipperary

The Ballyvadin Dairy Calf-to-Beef Walk was held on July 22nd highlighting how a profitable and sustainable dairy-beef system is built on high genetic merit calves. Key parameters that are examined on source farms before purchasing calves focus on health, genetics and performance, excellent early-life management and efficient grass utilisation. Selecting calves with strong Commercial Beef Values (CBV), maintaining high health standards and maximising performance from grazed grass are key drivers of profitability. The event also demonstrated that a well-managed, grass-based dairy-beef enterprise can deliver strong financial returns while remaining labour-efficient and environmentally sustainable.

Dealing with Summer Drought

In the last days of July soil moisture deficits in the South-East were 70-80mm with little rain forecast. As this newsletter was being compiled it was reminiscent of 2018 and perhaps as you read this some decent rainfall may have arrived and the following advice can be filed away for future reference. Rain can be very localised so the most important advice we can give is to walk your farm regularly, measure grass, keep an eye on the forecast and seek advice early.

- Soil moisture deficits of over 50 mm have a significant impact on grass growth.
- The good news is that grass dry matters are high at 20% so livestock are very content.
- Additional concentrates in the parlour is a simple way of reducing grass demand. 6-8 kg should be allocated to reduce grass demand, along with the best available silage.
- Allocating grass for morning grazing and allocating silage on a sacrifice paddock or in the shed in the evening is a simple approach to dealing with grass shortages. Farms with a diet feeder can easily feed out a buffer feed in the field after grazing out in the morning.
- Budgeting existing silage reserves is foremost on the minds of many livestock farmers.
- Ensure the parlour feed has a flexible feed rate as requirements change quickly and you want to be able to increase or decrease feed. If there are high levels of silage in the diet or additional low protein feeds, such as beet pulp or soya hulls, the protein in the parlour feed may need to be increased to offset the loss of protein that is normally provided in grass. In this case we recommend moving to a 16% or 18% protein feed to maintain milk production. If your farm has a low availability of baled silage consider using **Bretts Grass/Fodder Stretcher Ration**, which is a high fibre 16% protein ration that can be fed safely at higher volumes of up to 6kg/head/day to complement parlour feeding and grass.
- Please let your Technical Sales Rep know if you use additional minerals such as boluses or water minerals as it is important not to oversupply minerals.

Feeding Guidelines for Dairy Cows

- The focus on feeding is to maintain milk production and pregnancies in spring calving herds. The aim is to remain flexible and adjust feeding levels depending on silage available, grass supply and milk yield. The circumstances will vary from farm to farm.

Aiming for 19 Kgs Dry Matter Intake with at least 40% from Forage (Silage and/or Grass)

	FARM A	FARM B	FARM C
Scenario on Farm	No Grass + Ad-lib Silage	No Grass + 8 kgs DM of Silage	Limited Grass (6kgs DM) + 68% DMD Silage
Daily Grass Utilised Dry matter (kgs DM/cow/day) (must allocate more)	No Grass	No Grass	6
Pit Silage – 68% DMD silage @ 25% Dry Matter* Baled silage equivalent for 100 cows (Bales @ 30% DM)	45 Kgs Fresh Silage 5 Bales	32 Kgs Fresh Silage 4 Bales	24 Kgs Fresh Silage 3 Bales
Total Supplementation with Parlour and/or Buffer Feed (Stretcher Ration or straights)	Total of 8.5 Kgs	Total of 12.5 Kgs	Total of 8.0 Kgs



Product Focus: Grass /Fodder Stretcher Ration 16%

Bretts Stretcher Ration has been formulated to offer a practical solution at farm level to deal with dry spells and late springs. In 2018 when we experienced similar severe drought conditions this ration was a life saver to many farms. It is carefully formulated to 'do what it says on the tin.' We have selected raw materials with high levels of digestible fibre safe to feed as an additional buffer feed alongside high cereal parlour feed.

The ration acts as a partial replacement for forage in the diet. Introduce slowly and allow up to 6 kgs/head/day. It is important for rumen function that silage/grass/straw makes up at least 40% of the total diet on a dry matter basis, so for a dairy cow this is at least 8 kgs DM of forage.

Bretts Stretcher Ration is suitable for milking cows, maiden heifers and store cattle. For weanlings ideally continue with your regular feed and adlib silage. For forward cattle we would recommend a beef cube or ration formulated for finishing cattle. Our **Grass Stretcher Ration** is a competitively priced 16% protein and is currently available to order in bulk. Contact your Bretts Sales Representative for further advice.

For every 5 tons of Grass Stretcher Ration used on a farm it will save approximately 4,400 kgs of Dry Matter of Grass or the equivalent of 22 bales of silage (at 200 kgs DM per bale).

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