

Shinagh Dairy Farm Report 24-02-2016

Profitable Science Based Farming

Farm Details

Area available 78 ha

Farm Cover 825 kg/DM/Ha (7 kg/dm/day growth since Feb 3rd)

3.5 kgs of a 14% protein ration being fed to milkers per day.

165 cows calved (72% of the herd), planned calving start date Feb 7th

The planned start of calving (based on a gestation length of 283days) was Feb 7th. There were 27 animals calved by that date. Calving is now over peak. We are feeding 3.5 kgs of a 14% coarse ration that has minerals and calmag in it. This is what we need to feed in our grass budget taking account of normal growth rates between here and April and our expected calving pattern in order not to take the farm less than 400kg/ha by late March. We will adjust feeding level based on the spring rotation planner and our forward grass budget. Cows are getting grass day and night, for 3 hours as much as possible. There have been days when ground has been poached beyond our limits due to the extreme wet conditions. This has led to cows staying in the following days more than we like in order to allow ground to firm up and to keep poaching to an acceptable level. They go out after evening milking and are brought back in at 8pm. It is essential to let the cows out with an appetite and take them back in once they stop grazing to minimise poaching damage. This means that the cows have to run out of silage during the night if they are going out after the morning milking. On wet mornings they will be left standing in the collecting yard until conditions improve before being allowed out to the paddock. We are operating to a spring rotation plan and planned to have 38% grazed by Mar 1st this year. This was an increase from our target of 30% in previous years. Because of the ground conditions we have less ground grazed and will get to our normal level of 30% grazed by Mar 1st now. 20% of the farm is grazed to date. Our demand is increasing rapidly as cows calve. Calving is going well with 165 cows and heifers calved. There is a strict policy of ensuring that all cows and heifers get sufficient Pre-calver mineral each day. This and ensuring easy calving AI bulls (less than 3% calving difficulty for cows and less than 1.5% for heifers) is a factor in having very few retained afterbirths.

We have applied 34 units of Urea per acre on the entire farm including the high covers. Current milk test is 4.64% Fat, 3.69% Protein, 4.86% lactose, 153,000 SCC and 18,000 TBC. Yield is approximately 20 litres per cow per day.

Weekly updates are on the Shinagh website: <http://www.shinaghdairy.ie/>