

29th January 2019

Current PastureBase Ireland Performance:

PastureBase
IRELAND

Average Farm Cover	Growth
920 kgDM/ha	7 kgDM/ha

Note: This growth rate is calculated from closing cover to opening cover (over winter growth)

- Carry out an opening cover on your farm to:
 1. Assess grass supply on your farm
 2. Identify dry areas of the farm to graze in wet weather
- Growth over the winter has been good- grass supply is plentiful on farms that were closed off properly last autumn
- Make an effort to utilise grass on farms this spring and to minimise supplementation levels

Location	Moorepark
DM%	13%

Spring Rotation Plan:

It is important to graze as much area as possible early in the spring (i.e. early February) to:

- Have enough regrowth to start the 2nd rotation in early April
- Remove dead material that has been present over the winter period and to establish active, leafy grass on the farm

Targets	Light/ Early Farm	Heavy/Very Late Farm
30% Grazed	1st March	Mid- March
65% Grazed	17th March	1st April
Start of 2nd Rotation	Early April	Mid-April



PastureBase Ireland shows that there is a large amount of grass on farms this spring. Reaching 30% grazed in February will be challenging. See the following tips on how to reach 30% grazed in February:

Dairy:

- Turn out cows as they calve to low covers of 600– 900 kgDM/ha (6-8 cm).
- Avoid feeding silage- feed grass plus meal alone.
- If weather conditions turn wet, on-off graze so that livestock still get their full grass allocation for the day (2 blocks of 3 hrs) (prioritise grazing ground 1st to have regrowth by the 2nd rotation)

Drystock:

- Turn out yearling heifers and young stock early to low covers.
- Minimise supplementation levels and prioritise quality grass.
- Target early turnout for cows and calves near a shed.

Example: 45ha Dairy Farm

15ha to be grazed in Feb, 30ha to be grazed by 17th March, start of 2nd round early April.

Daily area allocation: 0.5ha

If the farmer has an average of 50 cows calved in February allocating 8kgDM grass and 3kg meal. 50 cows X 8kgDM Grass= 400 kgDM demand/day

To graze 0.5ha per day, the farmers pre grazing yield must be 800 kgDM/ha on average in February.
(weanlings can also be turned out to reach target area)



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Slurry and Fertiliser:

- Farmers in the Cavan, Monaghan, Leitrim and Donegal zone can spread chemical fertiliser and slurry this Friday 1st February
- With so much grass on farms, the trailing shoe is a good option for farmers to spread slurry on covers up to 1,200 kgDM/ha (9cm)
- In wetter/colder weather, the chemical formulation of a product like urea is a lot more resilient/stable than a product like CAN.
- Spreading slurry and fertiliser soon can reduce the workload during the calving period. The contractor is also a viable option to use for fertiliser and slurry spreading where workload is an issue.



Spring Grazing:

- Make sure to meet residuals of 3.5– 4cm to have quality grass in the second rotation. Grazing out paddocks well will also maximise growth rates as dead/old material will be removed from the sward
- Walk the farm at the beginning of each week. Carry out an average farm cover and assess ground conditions in each paddock. Put a plan in place for the week and execute it. By walking the farm, good decisions can be made early and grazing management improves as a result
- Use a strip wire and a back-fence to protect regrowths
- Hang up a farm map in the dairy/ office and make sure to record decisions, grass covers, fertiliser etc.



Right: Mark Heffernan, Co. Kilkenny records key messages on the whiteboard in his dairy with the grass plan for the week ahead. Mark farms in conjunction with his father Billy and brother Liam. Grassland Farmer of the Year Winners Leinster 2017.

Key Message from the Grass10 Spring Walk on the Farm of Jarleth Hughes, Co. Meath:

“Find the paddock that is high and dry and turn stock on to it when the rain starts. I’ll get out to grass this spring. The only way to find this paddock is to get out and walk the farm!”

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