



## Lyons Systems Research Herd Notes

**Background:** It is widely recognised that grass-based systems offer a competitive advantage and will predominate in Ireland. However, grazing systems that have been developed to utilise large quantities of grazed grass have in the main been based on low-output per cow. In this scenario, high levels of profitability are possible through avid cost control and comparatively high stocking rates for grazing systems. There are now reasons to consider the development of grazing systems that are based on high-output per cow. These reasons include (i) concerns about increasing dairy cow numbers and environmental emissions, (ii) facilitating farm expansion post EU-milk quota removal for land limited and fragmented farms, (iii) lack of available skilled labour on farms to deal with expanding animal numbers. The rationale for this research is that a high output grass-based spring milk production system can be profitable when built on a foundation of good grassland management and meeting both milk and fertility targets and has a place in a sustainable Irish dairy industry.

For more details on the High Output Systems Research Herd visit <http://www.ucd.ie/agfood/welcomemessage/systemsresearchherd/>.

## Lyons Systems Research Herd Notes Week 09-04-2018

### Farm Details:

Area available: 17.65  
Current Stocking Rate (MP): 3.29  
Farm Cover: 829 kg DM/ha  
Growth Rate: 35 kg DM/ha/day  
Demand: 46 kg DM/ha/day  
Average Concentrate Supplement: 8 kg/head/day  
Average DIM: 60 days  
Cows Calved: 58 (out of 60)



Image © Zoe McKay

**Current Daily Feed Budget:** AFC on the 9th of April was 829 kg DM/ha (range 424 to 1443 kg DM/ha). As of Monday (9<sup>th</sup> of April), the cows are back out grazing and are being allocated 13 kg DM of grass. Cows are also being fed 3 kg DM of 1<sup>st</sup> cut silage (31% DM; 81% DMD; 0.92 UFL) and 8 kg of a high energy concentrate. Cows over 60 DIM are still on 8 kg of concentrate rather than the 6 kg originally planned in the feed budget. The extra concentrate fed to these cows will be adjusted in the feed budget later in the year. This will be the diet until the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> rotation on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April.

**Spring Grazing Plan:** Last week, the average soil temperature (at 100 mm deep) was 6.9°C. Average grass growth was 35 kg DM/ha which increased cover/LU to 252 kg DM. From Monday on, the cows will be out fulltime with a grass allocation of 13-15 kg DM/cow. At present, the covers on the first paddocks grazed in February are between 788 to 1038 kg DM/ha, with current growth rates, there should be covers in excess 1000-1200 kg DM/ha on these paddocks when the 2<sup>nd</sup> rotation commences on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April.

**Milk Production:** Average weekly production is currently 30.49 kg/cow as of the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> of April at 4.59% fat and 3.31% protein (2.41 kg MS). SCC is 78,000. Fat, protein and SCC figures are based on milk recording results from the 14<sup>th</sup> of March.

**Body Condition Score:** Last Friday, the herd was assessed for BCS, the average BCS for the milking herd was 2.93. There was 15.79% (9/57) of the milking herd with a BCS of  $\leq 2.5$ ; 3.77% (4/57) have a BCS  $\geq 3.5$ . Of the three remaining dry cows, one cow has a BCS of 3.0 and the other 2 have BCS's of 3.25.