

GRASS TIPS



What % of your farm have you closed so far?

- Dry farms that had a target of 60-70% closed in October, should have 35% closed this week as we reach mid-point in the month.
- Heavy soils should have 45% + closed.
- Ground conditions are deteriorating & forecasts from Met Eireann reveal rainfall amounts of over 50mm can be expected this week which will put further pressure on grazing.
- Aim to keep grass in the diet, even by day if weather conditions get difficult.
- Every week delay in closing reduces spring grass supply by 100 Kg DM/ha. Paddock choice during closing is critical (see below).
- To get good clean outs on paddocks continue to strip-graze, use a back fence & multiple access points to reduce damage.
- The aim on dry farms is to have 60-70% of the farm closed by 1st November and heavy soils about 80%. So for a 30ha farm this means grazing 20ha (66%) in 25 days, i.e. 0.80ha/day or 5.5ha per week.
- Complete an AFC this week on PBI to review % grazed.

Keep an eye on AFC in order to extend the grazing season

- The objective of autumn grazing management is to keep grass in the diet of the grazing animal while at the same time closing up the farm properly to provide grass in spring.
- The AFC is declining faster than normal on all PBI farms with low DM% meaning animals are "running" through grass at the minute. Many herds have introduced silage into the diet.
- Grass growth is now lower than herd demand, therefore the management of AFC becomes more critical.
- Why do we plan grass allocations into the autumn? Because it will help stretch grass for longer in the diet. Stretching out grass will increase the amount grown and every day at grass increases profitability of your farm. The PBI budget will indicate how much silage will need to be fed during closing.

AUTUMN GRAZING TARGETS

Date	Cover/Cow (Kg DM)	Average Farm Cover (Kg DM/Ha)	Rotation Length
STOCKING RATE OF 2.5 LU/HA			
Mid-September	400-450	1,000-1,100	35 Days
1st October	400	1,000	40 Days
1st November Fully Housed	60%+ of grazing platform should br closed for Spring 600		
STOCKING RATE OF 3.0 LU/HA			
Mid-September	370	1100	35 Days
1stOctober	380	1150	40 Days
1st November Fully Housed	65%+ of grazing platform should br closed for Spring 650		

Management of heavy covers with silage in the diet

- Weather conditions & low grass dry matter % mean that silage is present in the diet on many farms throughout the country.
- Managing the quantity of silage fed is important to avoid the risk of under grazing during closing. Over feeding of silage will diminish appetite of the grazing animal and compromise the graze out of the sward especially at high covers.
- Where silage is being fed at night it is important that animals returning to the grazing sward the next day do not have silage in front of them before turn out to grass. This will improve their appetite for grazing and help achieve the correct residual.

Picking your paddocks to graze in Spring 2024

- While closing-off is influenced by ground conditions, paddock choice during closing is critical. To start grazing next spring, some of the drier paddocks that have good grazing infrastructure with roadways and plenty of access/exit points will need to be targeted.
- So these paddocks will need to be closed mid-October to ensure a good supply of grass is available to start grazing next spring.
- You should be grazing these paddocks now!

Picking paddocks to graze first next spring

