

Messages:

- ▶ **Make 2020 a LEAN dairy farmer year.**
- ▶ **Take a LEAN approach to pre-calving minerals.**
- ▶ **Make plans for your male calves.**
- ▶ **Use the LEAN approach to mastitis prevention.**
- ▶ **Use LEAN to prepare now for calving and calf rearing.**
- ▶ **A LEAN approach to fertiliser management and grass growth.**
- ▶ **Weigh replacement heifers to ensure they on target.**

By Matt Ryan

MAKE 2020 A LEAN FARMING YEAR!

- ▶ Dairy farmers now need more time to MANAGE their businesses. Why do they not MANAGE more? Because they don't have time? Can you honestly say that?
- ▶ Abigail Ryan, Teagasc, at the Teagasc Dairy Conference, outlined how LEAN farming frees up time.
- ▶ Toyota have been one of the earliest practicers of Lean. The "Toyota Way" definition of LEAN is "A long journey that needs commitment, patience, long-term thinking, positive mindset and attitude, and continuous improvement which are merged together as operational excellence and as a strategic weapon"
 - ▶ The Toyota Way is regarded as the benchmark for the way many industries should operate. Let's modify and apply to farming.
 - ▶ LEAN dairy farming means: avoiding/cutting out waste; maximising profit/time per man, per hectare and per € capital invested,
 - ▶ It is a business philosophy.
- ▶ Abigail says that "LEAN aims to make work simpler to understand and manage by identifying, reducing and eliminating waste in all its forms". She gave example of types of WASTE.
 1. Transport: (Excessive movement of raw material or product). Poor farmyard or paddock layout resulting in excessive movement of cows, calves, silage, feed, fertiliser, slurry etc.
 2. Inventory: Excessive use of sprays, drugs, dosing, grass seed, animals(over-stocked), machinery (lying half idle), fertiliser, keeping calves and/or cull cows too long, over-feeding stock that don't need extra feed, etc.
 3. Motion: (Excessive movement): Excessive movement by the farmer, e.g. walking, lifting, searching, moving carrying, going to 'town' for small items, etc.
 4. Waiting: Deliveries of meal, vaccines, contractors, machinery, AI technician, appointments, members of the farm teams, etc.
 5. Over production: (Producing too much of anything): Over-cooling of milk, recording too much of never used information.
 6. Defects: (Inferior quality): Antibiotic and high SCC milk, low soil fertility, equipment and machinery breakdowns, lameness, low milk solids production, unhealthy cows; roadways, leaking pipes and water pipes, etc.

7. Skills: (Not utilising people or resources effectively): Inadequate training of staff, not able to train staff, being inadequate to manage oneself/staff etc.
 - ▶ Contact your Adviser or Co-op person for guidance on this and to set in motion because all other plans and activities flow from the concept

"LEAN" APPROACH: MINERALS TO PREVENT

- ▶ Mineral deficiency pre-calving is responsible for retained placenta, calf deaths at birth, calving difficulty, milk fever, tetany and many more related problems. If some of these problems occurred last spring, ask yourself why, with particular emphasis on the quality and quantity of the mineral being fed. Don't skimp on this investment
- ▶ A reputable pre-calving mineral must be fed to cows and heifers from 40 days before calving.
- ▶ Feed 150grams /cow/day. Shake half of this quantity evenly on the silage morning and evening.
- ▶ If your farm has a special mineral problem then include extra quantities of that mineral. It more than likely will be copper, selenium or iodine. Talk to your Vet so as to get this correct if you want to prevent extra hardship and work.

MAKE PLANS FOR YOUR MALE CALVES:

- ▶ The following was the proportion of beef calves from the Dairy herd for 2018: 40% Fr; 27% AA; 18% He; 7% LM; 3% BB; and 5% others.
 - ▶ From these figures should there be an issue with male calves?
 - ▶ If there is, the solutions should be addressed by Ireland Inc. In the whole of the farming community there should be no shortage of calf housing and rearers (needs co-ordination); calf exports are an option (being worked on); veal production should be an option (DAF should co-ordinate); and the facts/potential profits from dairy calf -to-beef should be highlighted (Teagasc).
 - ▶ If financial support in the short term, as well as the SFP, is necessary then it should happen because farming is so important to the fabric of rural Ireland.
 - ▶ In the meantime, dairy farmers, as they have done in the past, will have to be pro-active for calving 2020 to deal with male calves.
- ▶ Some few dairy farmers will be able to hold onto male calves for longer than 10 – 14 days, because they have housing space.
 - ▶ If you can rear them for that period and prices/sales are difficult you would be best to rear and sell as weanlings or as yearlings in April. This is and will be very profitable because there will be a demand for them.
 - ▶ For farmers' tight in-house space and who have plans to rear on, they should make plans to let out to grass in early March. There is plenty of farmer experience to show that this works well – but plan it.
 - ▶ You should know that you could carry 7-8 calves per ha for the year.
- ▶ The remaining dairy farmers will have to depend on exports (a small help) but more than anything, on other

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cattle farmers buying their calves. Therefore, dairy farmers will need to “sell the concept” of profitable calf to beef from dairy stock to neighbouring cattle farmers: Guarantee him calves with adequate colostrum, good calf care during those early days by showing him your set-up. Also inform of the potential for profit based on Teagasc figures.

- ▶ Teagasc have a number of published booklets on “Dairy Beef Systems” (Consult their web page)
- ▶ What are the pros and cons of a dairy calf to beef system as outlined by Teagasc?

Pros:

- ▶ Dairy calves are cheaper than suckler weanlings.
- ▶ Do not have the need of having a suckler cow in the system,
- ▶ Better control of animal performance when calves are purchased from an early age.

Cons:

- ▶ Calves need to be reared to weanling (automatic/simple feeders overcome this challenge),
- ▶ Greater potential for losses,
- ▶ Volatility in calf prices, concentrate prices and beef price.
- ▶ Purchasing calves from multiple sources can bring disease risk.

Potential Profit:

- ▶ 23 month finished steer at €70/calf purchase price gave a projected profit of €254/ha (doesn't include SFP).
- ▶ Even Jersey X's, based on older data left a little lower profit (Calf €30)
- ▶ I think calf prices will be less than these because of supply and demand and I know dairy farmers will be only too glad to sell “in-the-yard” which ‘takes care’ of two of the cons, namely; volatile calf price and buying from multiple sources.
- ▶ I gather in a recent dairy calf to beef trial in Grange that Holstein Friesians (calves bought from 4-5 highest EBI bulls) when compared with AA from the dairy herd performed as well but finishing a month later (mid Dec) being 20-25kgs carcase heavier.
- ▶ Spend time in January talking to potential cattle farmer who might purchase your calves.

“LEAN” MASTITIS RISK PREVENTION

- ▶ Mastitis causes severe financial losses and frustration during milking.
- ▶ The last two weeks before calving are key to avoiding mastitis during the first 21 days post calving.

Mastitis is prevented by having:

- ▶ Clean environment
- ▶ Good milking machine.
- ▶ Good milking routine.
- ▶ Good cow immunity.
- ▶ This is the month where the cow's immunity decreases – last months of pregnancy and the influence of the dry cow drug wears off.
 - ▶ Scrape yards and cubicles at least twice per day.
 - ▶ Avoid overcrowding (1 cubicle/cow) Move shy feeders and cows that lie in passages onto a straw

bedded area with plenty of feeding face.

- ▶ Heifers calving down or getting mastitis in first 7 days, indicates that they have been exposed to stress and/or dirty bedding in the last few weeks of pregnancy. If that has happened you in the past put solutions in place.
- ▶ Milking machines are the cause of 40 per cent of mastitis problems
 - ▶ Get it serviced now by a qualified technician. Make sure to get a print-out and act on the recommendations. If your technician isn't up to scratch get a new technician.
 - ▶ If milking and wash up is taking 2-3 hours morning and evening, consider the addition of a dump line, an automatic bulk tank and milking machine washer.
 - ▶ If you are milking more than 8 rows consider adding a few more units to your machine, if possible.
 - ▶ These suggestions should be seriously considered if you are paying a lot of tax or if you are expanding.
- ▶ Poor milking routine is the cause of 30 per cent of mastitis on farms.
 - ▶ Unfortunately some farmers think they have a good milking routine but they have never learned the correct routine. And more unfortunate they are teaching employees/family their own incorrect methods.
 - ▶ It is something that must be re-learned and practiced.
 - ▶ Padraig O'Connor, Teagasc Grange, does a very good milking routine training course.
- ▶ Ketosis, acidosis and lameness are very much associated with feeding regime:
 - ▶ Fat cows could get ketosis,
 - ▶ Introduce diet changes gradually after calving to avoid acidosis,
 - ▶ Daily walk through the cow, checking for lameness/tenderness, listlessness, coughing, runny nose and other indicators of poor health.

“LEAN” CALVING PLAN?

- ▶ This is the last month of pregnancy. Crucial for ease of calving, health of calf, deficiency problems post calving, fertility etc.
- ▶ Are your cows in good condition? They must be in a body score of 3.25 to 3.5 at calving. If thin, feed them well in early lactation rather than now.
- ▶ Late calving cows, being fed poor silage, that are thin should get 1-2 Kgs of meal from now until 1-2 weeks before calving. So, go out and assess the body score of your cows and take action.
- ▶ Calving boxes must now be clean, disinfected and gates must be in good working order.
- ▶ Check all the expected calving dates of your cows and know exactly which cows are due when. The ICBF print out is very helpful. Divide them out accordingly. A ‘maternity ward’ for 9-10 calvers, due to calve in next few days, is a great idea.
- ▶ Prepare and have ready all equipment necessary for a successful calving, such as ropes, calving jack, disinfectant, iodine etc

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Roisin Cahill, Pharmacist,
Kilkenny with her father,
Pat Cahill

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Hazel Beattie, Blessington

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- ▶ Any unexpected calf deaths should be sent to the lab for analysis.
- ▶ If salmonella scour in calves has been a problem in the past it is almost certain you would benefit from vaccinating the cows. Consult your Vet.
- ▶ A common and worthwhile practice now is to employ a “night time calver”. Where herds are smallish, 2-3 farmers are joining up to make this happen. Hygiene is terribly important.

“LEAN” CALF REARING PREPARATIONS:

- ▶ This involves having a plan where all the bits-and-pieces/requirements plus protocols (SOPs) are in place before the 1st cow calves. The principle must be to minimise the time spent walking, carrying calves or milk to calf houses; while at the same time ensuring the staff know exactly how to feed, manage sick calves, etc.
- ▶ This is a terribly labour demanding chore at a time when dairy farmers are very, very busy. We must organise it to reduce the labour requirement. Farmers have made great

strides in this area in recent years.

- ▶ Earlier, compact calving has resulted in a lot of calves being in houses longer: requires more labour to feed and clean out houses, with the increased risk of scour and pneumonia. So, plan to move calves out to fields with grass from 2-4 weeks of age. Many farmers are doing this successfully.
- ▶ A mobile teat feeder works well when calves are outside. This can feed up over 30-50 calves at the same time. Spend money on a good one - best that milk flows to calf rather than he having to suck it from below his level.
- ▶ Some farmers allow calves run back into open fronted sheds or lean-tos to acclimatise calves to the harsh realities of being outside. Sheds must be high and airy.
- ▶ When outside, calves need a ‘dry-lie’ because he spends over 80% of his time lying down. Shelter is vitally important also.
- ▶ To avoid spreading John’s Disease, do not batch feed cows’ milk to replacement heifers, feed milk replacer instead. It would be a good idea to test all cows

individually by blood or milk to identify high risk cows. With this information you can ensure that infected cows colostrum and milk is never, ever fed to replacement heifer calves.

- ▶ Individual pens are a good idea in smallish herds but are labour intensive due to cleaning and feeding methods.
- ▶ The calf MUST, I emphasise MUST, get biestings, 3 litres, within 2-3 hrs of calving.
- ▶ For larger herds, batch calves in groups of 5 from 1-3 days, feeding from a multiple teat feeder, with 5 divisions, so that each calf only drinks his own lot. This feeder hangs on the gate and can be moved from pen to pen. Supervise the feeding of these 5 calves so that all drink their share. Move on the fast drinkers to a 10-15 teat feeder after 4-5 days leaving the slow ones behind to pick up a batch of similar drinking speed. From 2 weeks calves should get 6 litres/day, (5 for Jersey X)
- ▶ Don’t over-feed calves during the first few weeks as we usually kill calves with kindness and not the other way round. Therefore, put this system in place during January as you won’t have time in February.

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Wednesday,
19th February, 2020

Donegal (Venue to be confirmed)

www.teagasc.ie/events

LEAN SOIL FERTILITY MANAGEMENT

- ▶ Lean, in this case means not wasting P & K on fields with high Soil indices and building up soils low in these nutrients. Huge quantities of N are wasted when soil pH and P are deficient.
- ▶ Lime, phosphorous and potash levels are slipping into an all-time low with disastrous consequence to grow large quantities of grass.
- ▶ Phosphorous levels continue to decrease in Irish soils: Grass growth is reduced by 15-30 per cent, and the loss is greatest in spring and autumn, when you really need grass.
- ▶ Potash is another major mineral required for grass growth: Deficiency reduces yield of grass by 10+ per cent.
- ▶ Lime (Calcium) is absolutely essential now that we are expected to grow grass with less Nitrogen. In the past Nitrogen was an expensive compensator for low lime. There is no need to remind you that where lime is deficient that (a) ryegrass and clover die out quickly (b) pastures are unpalatable and have low feeding value (c) silage will also have poorer feeding qualities (d) grass yield will be reduced, particularly, at the beginning and end of the year, (e) poorer use of soil N, potassium and phosphorous, (f) better soil structure, drainage and more earth worms. The ideal ph for grassland is 6.5 in the top inch and 6.3 to 6.5 in the top 4 inches. A ph of 6.0 is recommended in high molybdenum soils.
- ▶ A soil test will save you money and will make money for you. Going from Index 1 to high Index 3 in Phosphate and Potash will grow you an extra 3 tons of grass per hectare without any extra N.
- ▶ The following are the spreading guidelines for slurry and N (follow the rules):

Application Date	Slurry/FYM/Nitrogen
a) 16 week storage zone	12th January
b) 18 week storage zone	15th January
c) 20 week storage zone	31st January
d) 22 week storage zone	31st January

Best results are got from spreading slurry in spring, so be ready when weather is dry and fine. Use the umbilical system so as not to spoil grass, which many farmers do. Have tanks agitated – of course be careful of slurry gas. The recommended level of nitrogen now for all farmers (regardless of stocking rate) is 23 units of nitrogen per acre for early grass. As protected urea is more cost effective and environmentally friendlier, apply 23units/acre on the above dates on one-third of the milking platform/farm. As 1000 galls watery slurry contains 8-10 units of N, you should apply 2500galls/acre to two-thirds of the grazing area using the umbilical system instead of bag N on the above dates. This recommendation saves money by getting better use of the N in slurry.

LEAN REPLACEMENT MANAGEMENT?

- ▶ Due to yearling heifers being a lot under or over target weights, many farmers' 1st calvers are producing over 1000 kgs of milk less than their genetic potential. This also manifests itself in lower lifetime yields and higher

culling rate or longer calving intervals for 1st calvers.

- ▶ Our target weights now for heifers are (47 per cent of the cows mature weight):

British Friesians: 260 kgs

Jersey Crosses: 250 kgs

Holsteins: 265 kgs

Weigh yours to compare.

- ▶ Heifers below target must be fed extra meal now: For every 1 kg they are under target will they will need and extra 5 kgs of meal. If they are 10 kgs off target you must feed 50 kgs of meal over the next 30 days. Plan to get them to grass in early February with 2 kgs meal. Animals over target need no meals if they have good silage.
- ▶ If you are not expanding or changing cow type/age structure you only need 20-25 per cent bulling heifers of your herd size. Sell off the surplus.

"LEAN" BITS AND PIECES:

- ▶ Because you are the most important person on the farm make plans that you will be well fed; well rested and in good health for the spring season.
 - ▶ Will you and staff have a dinner every day?
 - ▶ Will you be able to get 7-8 hours' sleep? If not take steps now to have extra help available.
 - ▶ Have you recently had a personal MOT?
 - ▶ Wives/partners should ensure these questions are asked and addressed because men are procrastinators on such matters.
- ▶ Spend time in January "training in" new staff/students to your ways of doing things. But make sure it is correct and not in conflict with what the student has learned.
- ▶ Groups should hold the Profit Monitor meeting in January.
 - ▶ In compiling the data be careful to deal with contract reared heifers correctly and the livestock inventories must balance.
 - ▶ If you are below Group averages take action.
 - ▶ Groups should rotate chairmen every year to keep the group active and vibrant. It is also good training for each member to become chairman.
 - ▶ Your Group should embark on a LEAN project for 2020.
- ▶ IFAC have a new financial package for its clients, called FarmPRO, which does budgeting and forecasting while giving production date which can be benchmarked against other dairy farmers. The fact that one will have up-to-date financial data throughout the year allowing comparison against the budget will undoubtedly be beneficial.

Irish Grassland Association Dairy Conference:

Charleville, Co Cork, 8 January

Happy New Year – 2020

Wishing all my readers a healthy and wealthy 2020. Try and not to worry too much!

"Business is based on relationships"