



Harvest 2024

The harvest commences this month and our Agronomy Team reports that the recent rain has provided a welcome boost to crops.

It has been a challenging 12 months for tillage farmers so hopefully we will see some sunshine and settled weather for the harvest.

This is a busy time on farms and everyone should be mindful of farm safety. At this time, we want to wish all our cereal growers a safe and successful harvest.

Carrickshock Pure Friesian Open Day



Farmer Pat Cleary (left) pictured at the Brett Brothers stand during the June 27th open day.

On June 27th, dairy farmers from near and far descended on the parish of Hugginstown to see the wonderful Carrickshock herd of Pat and Claire Cleary's Irish Pure Friesian cows on display for the National Open Day.

Bretts were delighted to be a main sponsor of this prestigious event and to support the Cleary family who are very valued customers. Visitors enjoyed stock judging, trade stand exhibitions and technical talks. Compliments to the Cleary family and IHFA committees, specifically Paddy and Sinead Queally on the superb organisation. Everyone appreciated the wonderful hospitality – including burgers and ice cream – there's nothing like supporting the home produce!

The day ended with a sale of in-calf heifers, allowing buyers to invest in some sought after dam lines. There was a positive vibe amongst fellow farmers who appreciate good dairy stock and enjoyed the opportunity to socialise. Over the summer, everyone should make an effort to attend an Open Day or a local show.

On the day our Nutritionist, Heather Peppard, gave a synopsis of the Carrickshock herd which has had Pedigree status since 2002 when Pat's late father Martin invested in genetics and new blood lines. The focus has been on selecting bulls to breed a dual-purpose cow that is easily managed, productive and profitable in terms of milk production and with male progeny being kept on the farm to slaughter, there's also a focus on cow conformation. (PTO)

Welcome to Harry



Harry Cosgrave, who recently joined our Technical Sales Team.

We would like to give a warm welcome to Harry Cosgrave who has recently joined our Technical Sales Team. Harry hails from a drystock farm in Adamstown, Co. Wexford and has a strong interest in hurling. In 2020, he graduated from SETU Waterford with an Honours degree in Agriculture.

Having previously worked with Buyrite Solutions, Harry's technical expertise is now available to all our customers within his Wexford and Mid-Waterford Sales Area. Harry is available on 087 2595527 and will be working closely with Michael Foley, our Ruminant Support Specialist.

Carrickshock Pure Friesian Open Day



Pat Cleary, a valued Brett Brothers customer, outlining herd breeding during the open day.

Pat is the third generation of his family to farm in Carrickshock and is joined by his wife Claire and their two young children. The land base of over 300 acres comprises of a 140 acre milking block and six smaller blocks for silage and youngstock. The building of a new cubicle shed allowed them to increase cow numbers and move to compact spring calving with cows calving January to early April.

Currently, there are 209 cows milking while the farm stocking rate is 2.9 LU/Ha. All cows are bred to conventional semen with 40 yearling Pedigree bulls reared and sold for breeding. Male animals not selected for breeding are reared on grass and finished on silage and Bretts Beef Elite.

The average annual yield is 6,954 kgs of milk/cow with 545 kgs of milk solids produced in 2023, 3.54% protein and 4.29% fat. Average EBI is €187 with an average parity in the herd currently at 3.11. For Pedigree breeders the average classification score is 82.2 with 9 Ex, 57 VG and 70 GP in the herd. Surplus heifers are sold in-calf.

The main focus on the farm is to look after the cow and calf. Cows began calving on January 10th while grass is optimised in the cow's diet when grazing conditions allow, usually in early February. Pat noted that excellent quality silage is a key ingredient in the diet of the freshly calved cow. The nutritional plan is simple – grazed grass, good quality grass silage and a dairy cube in the parlour, starting with 18% Milkwell, moving to a lower protein Maxi Breeder 14% dairy cube when grass supply is sufficient. Last year, 1.2 tons/cow was fed with the majority being front loaded in early lactation.

Pat puts a lot of effort into targeting the correct silage to the correct stock with dairy cows getting the highest quality silage available, followed by replacements and finishing cattle, while dry cow silage is made with lesser amounts of fertiliser and higher stem content. Haylage is made specifically for calves.

The presiding Judge on the day, Eamonn Coleman, was most complimentary of the cow body condition, health and uniformity of the herd and commended the Clearys on the display of their stock. He specifically noted the entire herd's quiet temperament and attributed this to the stockmanship. The take home message from Heather was to focus on doing the basics well on a consistent basis in terms of daily management, cow health, improved grass and forage quality and not to over complicate the cow's diet. Nothing is rushed on the Cleary farm; decisions aren't made in a hasty fashion and this is evident both in the overall success of herd productivity and the demand for their breeding stock.



Poor grass growth



Many are scratching their heads as to why grass growth has been so poor. The cause is multi-factorial, including a combination of delayed Nitrogen application, a wet autumn/spring followed by the harsh, drying wind, cooler temperatures and in some cases lack of moisture in mid-June. Delayed fertiliser and slurry application means there's a lower than normal reserve of N in the ground which may explain the reduction in grass proteins and milk production (yield and low milk protein/urea).

Because of this, the grass plant hasn't been able to utilise the nitrogen in the ground and this has led to very low grass proteins of 15% average. Previously, grass proteins would typically have been over 20% on a consistent basis. The fertiliser allowances have been reduced on most farms and there are serious concerns regarding how grassland farms can grow sufficient grass for their current stocking rate.

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