



# AGRONOMY UPDATE

Harvest 2022 is coming to a close. The dry spells have played a key part in farmers wrapping up the harvest in a timely fashion. Harvest reports are generally satisfactory with some excellent yields of cereals, rape and pulses. Aim to get all field maintenance jobs (hedge cutting, levelling, drainage etc.) in the field done now before the busy sowing period kicks in. Cutting hedges is now permissible and should be carried out as soon as possible. Where compaction was an issue, sub-soiling should be considered. Straw should be incorporated at this stage where fields were chopped. Where brome was an issue, it is vitally important to get some light cultivations underway to encourage seeds to germinate. Allow minimum of 3 weeks before burning off. Focus on headlands especially, as this is where brome first becomes an issue. Acting now before it is too late can help to reduce the likelihood of herbicide resistance down the line, and is a key component of Integrated Pest Management.

### Oilseed Rape

There is still time to get OSR into the ground before it is too late. Switching to a more vigorous variety with rapid autumn development such as PT303 or DK ExStar is key when sowing into September. These are varieties with excellent resistance to lodging and high stem stiffness. Keep the seeding rate high when sowing later, aim for about 50 seeds/m<sup>2</sup>. Ensure to consider the thousand grain weight of the seed when calibrating the drill.



Image 1 and 2: Sowing Oilseed Rape at the Drummonds trial site



When sowing OSR, it is important to get the basics correct: ensure pH is above 6.5, sow into a fine firm seed bed with good seed-soil contact. To ensure an optimal establishment, incorporate the appropriate fertiliser to the seedbed based on up-to-date soil indices. Be on the lookout for slugs, flea beetle and pigeons grazing your crops. Shot-holes in the leaves are a result of slug damage. Slug pellets may be necessary.



Image 3. Slug grazing Oilseed Rape (Source: Farmers Weekly)



Image 4. Cabbage Stem Flea Beetle grazing Oilseed Rape (Source: Farmers Weekly)

### Winter Cereal Varieties for 2022/23

Now is the time to start thinking about which winter cereal varieties you are going to choose. Drummonds offer a range of the highest performing varieties which are trialled and tested in our variety evaluation programme.

### Winter Wheat Varieties

#### Torp

Torp performed extremely well in the 2021/2022 growing season, with many growers reporting yields upwards of 5t/acre. Choosing Torp this year offers the grower many benefits:

- High yields
- Good resistance against lodging and straw breakdown
- Excellent resistance to Septoria
- Excellent grain quality

#### Spearhead

Spearhead was provisionally recommended on the Department of Agriculture's Recommended List for 2022 for all the right reasons.

- High yielding
- Good resistance against lodging and straw breakdown
- Top Agronomic package
- Super grain quality

### Winter Barley Varieties

#### Bordeaux

Bordeaux is a 2-row winter barley with 6 row yields. Bordeaux has a superb specific weight and low screenings, an important consideration for the feed market. It also boasts early maturity and stiff straw.

- A very high yielding 2 row winter barley
- One of the best winter barley varieties against lodging
- Excellent resistance to powdery mildew and brown rust
- High grain quality

**Husky**

Husky will be the majority of winter oat seed planted for the 2022/2023 growing season. There are a number of reasons for this:

- Winter hardiness
- High yield potential
- Excellent stander
- Top Agronomic package
- Good grain quality

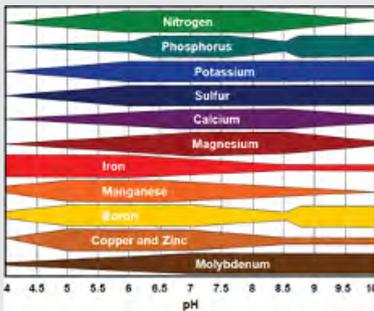
A number of other varieties will also be available through Drummonds, please contact your local sales representative for other enquiries.

**Lime**

Delivering and spreading lime at affordable prices across all our branches. The benefit of liming Irish soil is well known and was one of the earliest soil management practices that farmers adopted to improve the productivity of soils. It is no different today, as managing soils to keep them in the optimum soil pH, through regular soil testing offers many benefits. Only 12% of Irish soils are at an optimal level for soil pH, P & K. The benefits of lime are;

- Increased production
- Release up to 80kg/N/ha/year
- Unlock soil phosphorous (P) and potassium (K)
- Increase the response to freshly applied N, P & K
- Liming gives a 7:1 return on investment

As you can see from the diagram below, the top 6 nutrients required for plant growth are most available in the pH range from 6.0-7.5.



**Which lime to use?**

The most common ground lime used in Ireland is calcium lime, however the importance of a broad spectrum soil test is critical on choosing which lime to use. Drummonds provide a concise accurate soil test carried out by your local advisor, giving back useful and practical advice on how to correct your soil analysis. A desired calcium : magnesium ratio of 10:1 is required for optimal grass growth and up to 14:1 in tillage soils. Use magnesium lime where magnesium deficiencies need correcting. In soils where there are high levels of magnesium, use calcium limestone to balance to the desired ratio. Applying calcium limestone will increase calcium and reduce magnesium. Even if the pH looks OK you can still apply calcium lime in this situation. This opens up the soil allowing it to breathe, soil biology to flourish and water to drain down through the soil profile more easily.



**Lime facts**

Lime needs to be applied on a regular basis as it is continuously leached from the soil, mainly through drainage water. The use of N fertilisers and the removal of crops and livestock also remove lime from the soil.

Drummonds have always provided a top quality soil testing service and practical advice, which can be carried out by your local branch / advisor. Drummonds are now taking soil analysis to the next level where we will provide a full soil test analysis as well as providing Drummond's Ground Lime delivery and Spreading at affordable prices. Both methods of soil sampling can be carried out. Whether it be a standard W- Shaped test or a full field mapping service consisting of variable pH, P and K levels. Current regulations require one soil sample per 5 hectares and are valid for 4 years. Aim to test 20% of your farm annually.

Your local branch will organize a representative to carry out a soil test for analysis. We provide both standard and broad spectrum analysis and liaise with the farmer providing professional advice on how to correct your soil result.

Drummonds also offers a lime and variable rate lime spreading service through our branch network. We will organize ground lime deliveries and an accurate spreading service provided by our local contractor.



*Drummonds spreading lime through our designated contractor.*

# MANAGING GRAZING AND MINDING YOUR SOIL

Rainfall and poor ground conditions often lead to poaching. It is estimated that poaching can reduce grass growth by 20% for subsequent grazing, which could prove costly next Spring.

We can reduce the risk of poaching by allowing animals access to pasture for a few hours per day, known as on/off grazing. On/off grazing is where the animals are let out to grass with an appetite. Feed is restricted when indoors, they are then allowed to graze continuously and are removed from the paddock when finished grazing and brought back into the shed. This minimises soil damage, encourages good grass regrowth and ensures that grass is being well utilised.

It must be remembered that our grazing actions now will effect Spring grass growth so by implementing a few basic guidelines, we can continue to utilise grass without having a detrimental effect on next years grass growth and our ability to get stock out of sheds.

Ten tips for managing grazing during a wet period:

1. Avoid excessive poaching
2. Turn out priority stock first – this should be the group which will make the most economic use of paddocks first
3. Turn out into smaller groups where possible
4. Reduce paddock sizes to one day or 12-hour paddocks
5. Back fence grazing paddocks in both spring and autumn to ensure they have time to recover
6. On/off grazing has proven to be a successful way to extend the grazing season
7. Graze the most sheltered and driest fields first
8. Use multiple entrances to a field
9. Use a grass corridor to graze the back of the field first
10. Understand animal feed requirements and supplement when needed

# FEEDING BEFORE BREEDING

Breeding season has begun on some sheep farms across the country. Nutrition must be remembered in order to maximise the number of lambs born next Spring. Nutrition influences ewe productivity at all stages. Both underfeeding or overfeeding can potentially have a negative effect on ewe productivity, so it is important to have an understanding of your flocks nutrient requirements. Body condition scoring (BCS) is a manual assessment of the muscle and fat cover over the spine, behind the last rib in the loin area of the sheep. The system is based on a five-point scoring system (scores 1-5, extremely thin to overfat), it allows farmers to feed accordingly depending on BCS and the time of year.

A correct body condition score of 3.5 at breeding is important for fertility, with ovulation rates reduced by 45% for every one unit in BCS (AHDB, 2018). Ensuring ewes are the correct BCS at mating is the priority, with flushing being a secondary tool for those that fail to hit the targets. Ewes in the correct condition have good ovulation rates that will not be improved by a further rise in the level of nutrition. In periods of high nutrient demand, or when poor quality forage is offered, there is a need to offer supplementary feeds to meet the energy and protein requirements of the ewe. Using high quality meal alongside conserved forage such as silage or hay will prove cheaper as less is required and nutrient use efficiency will be improved within the rumen.

The compound feed or meal must have a higher energy density than the forage with which it will be fed. As a rule of thumb, it should be 11 MJ/kg DM (11 ME) or more. To achieve this level of energy, cereals are likely to be a key ingredient. Protein is the second most important factor to consider after energy. The level of protein is important but the source of protein is critical. There needs to be a good balance of Rumen degradable protein (RDP) and Digestible undegradable protein (DUP). The ingredients determine the protein percentage of the overall compound. For example, an 18% protein compound containing 10% soya would provide far more DUP than a 20% protein feed, where the main protein source is rapeseed meal. Feed quality is key.

Drummonds has a strong reputation for the performance of our Ewe rations and nuts. We have developed a number of winning rations over the years and the palatability and consistency of our ewe feeds and lamb creep and finisher rations is unequalled.

# DRUMMONDS SPECIAL OFFERS - SEPT 2022



**Tribex 10% 2.2L**  
Only €62.00  
(limited stock)



**Superclean Rocklor 25L (Hypochlorite)**  
€30.00



**Levafas Diamond**  
1L - €32.00  
4L - €105.00



**Chlor-Kleen Extra 5L**  
€16.00



**Acorn PreCalver Buckets 20kg**  
€22.00



**Acorn Calf/Beef Buckets 20kg**  
€19.00



**20 Space Cattle Ring Feeder**  
€310.00



**Cattle Trough**  
Single Galv. - €155.00  
Double Galv. - €245.00



**Twinwall Corri Pipe**  
225mm x 6m - €54.00  
300mm x 6m - €85.00



## BOOK YOUR SOIL SAMPLING

- Professional service
- Variable pH and nutrient sampling
- PCN testing
- Tailored field recommendations
- GPS sampling
- A sustainable approach

Available from your local Drummonds Branch



**Clonee**  
Tel: 01 825 5011

**Navan**  
Tel: 046 9021 641

**Dromone**  
Tel: 044 967 2650

**Ardee**  
Tel: 041 685 3332

**Mullingar**  
Tel: 044 9362 022

**Lusk**  
Tel: 01 525 2903

**Drogheda**  
Tel: 041 983 8986

**Rathcoffey**  
Tel: 087 3110 772

**Knockbridge**  
Tel: 042 937 4480

