

Tillage Conference 2024

At the recent Drummonds Tillage Conference on 24th January, topics discussed included an update on regulations, soil health, and practical cropping strategies to consider for the 2024 season. Members of the Drummonds Agronomy team shared technical insights on our varietal and agronomic trial work, information on Agriphos, our PK fertiliser containing additional secondary nutrients & trace elements, and N-Rich, the Drummonds premium liquid N fertiliser.



John O Loughlin, Group Head of Sustainability at Grassland Agro discussed the New Fertiliser Legislations and Soil Sustainability. John highlighted the importance of soil testing, correcting soil pH and testing for soil organic matter. He spoke on the three pillars of soil health – Chemical, Physical and Biological, and how each play a vital role in maintaining soil health. He suggested that we treat Carbon as the next big nutrient. As Organic Matter consists of 58% Carbon, it is something to keep an eye on going forward.



Ben Abell, Head of Agronomy at Dyson Farming gave us an insight into the past, present and future of their system and how their “circular farming” approach has benefited the diversity and profitability of their business. The farm expands across 36,000ac in 4 counties. Dyson Farming produce a range of crops including cereals, potatoes, peas, maize, and rye. Their Anaerobic Digester plant produces electricity for 10,000 homes in addition to generating gas and heat, used to run their Grain Drying facility and Strawberry glasshouses. Ben noted a 40% reduction in their winter cropping area and expressed that managing patchy crops will be a challenging task.



David Leahy, Business Development Manager with BASF Ireland gave excellent advice on the importance of detail when making agronomic decisions in 2024. David focused on the value of assessing plant counts

in each field on an individual basis. Agronomic decisions cannot be made without knowing the crop you’re dealing with. He emphasised that uniformity is key when determining the status of a crop, and how nutrient applications should mirror yield potential. David reminded growers that re-sowing should be a last resort, and that winter wheat can be sown until Mid-February.

The entire Drummonds Agronomy team would like to extend our gratitude to all who attended our conference and wish everyone the best for the 2024 growing season.



Drummonds Agronomy Services

SOIL SAMPLING

Healthy Soil = The Foundation of Success

- Soil pH testing for optimal nutrient availability
- Mapping options: 'W' pattern or precision GPS
- Enables targeted fertiliser applications
- Compliance - Legal requirement for an in-date soil report



Drummonds soil sampler in action

AGRIPHOS

Maximise yield potential with Agriphos. cost-effective, sustainable and multi-nutrient fertiliser.

- Cost effective source of P & K
- Low carbon footprint
- High levels of secondary nutrients and trace elements
- Available nationwide
- Professional spreading service available
- Build and maintain soil P & K
- Reliable, odour free and sustainable fertiliser

“We have been using Agriphos for several years now on our ware potatoes. We find that tuber yield and quality has increased using Agriphos, with more marketable grades and less waste. We have recently started to use Agriphos on our cereal crops and have found improved establishment and more resilient crops in drought situations”

- Seamus Spillane, Gibbstown Farm

N-RICH LIQUID FERTILISER

Get more from less with N-RICH liquid fertiliser.

- Bespoke blends tailored to your crop needs
- Cost-effective
- +/- Trace Elements and N Stabilisers for maximum crop response
- Precision application service available
- Flexible application windows
- Increased Nitrogen use efficiency
- Increased accuracy at field headlands
- Available from all Drummonds branches

“Switching our nitrogen applications from granular to liquid form has been instrumental in achieving higher yields from our crops due to its accuracy and efficiency. Nitrogen is now being applied when and where it should be.”

- Thomas Murphy, Farm Manager, Country Crest



Application of N-Rich liquid fertiliser



Wheat field at the Drummonds trial site in 2023

For more information and advice on our agronomy services simply contact your local Drummonds representative.



Field of flowering oil seed rape

Managing Freshly Calved Cows Stretching Fodder

With the spring calving campaign well underway, dairy farms can be very busy places. With so much work to do, it's very easy to become immersed in calving and keeping animals healthy and alive that sometimes the diet of the cow can be neglected. The issue here is that by the time the cow has calved, her milk yield and fertility for the year has already been determined. Peak yield occurs 6-8 weeks post calving, however peak intake doesn't occur until 12 weeks, resulting in an unavoidable energy gap. It's the cows with the highest genetic potential to milk well that will continue to lose weight for the longest period. This is why the highest yielders are often the last to go back in calf.



MAXIMISING INTAKE

Minimising this weight loss and hitting a high peak lactation yield is crucially important in achieving high submission rates and high lactation yields. Where weight loss exceeds 0.5 BCS, 3-week submission rates can drop as low as 40%. The key to maximising intake as quickly as possible is avoiding digestive upsets, namely acidosis and sub-acute rumen acidosis (SARA). Dry cows are usually fed consistent TMR rations containing straw, minerals and meal. Then when they calf down they are turned straight out to grass. This early grass diet contains less effective fibre, is lower in dry matter and offers a poor supply of quality protein. Early

grass is also centred on one or two big feeds, especially when on off grazing is necessary. These conditions are conducive to fluctuations in rumen pH (acidosis) and suppressed intakes. An appropriate transition period to grass will reduce the incidence of issues like acidosis and displaced abomasum but it does create extra workload. If possible, leave cows in for the first 10 days post calving and slowly introduce concentrates. The tried and tested out by day in by night is a very cow friendly way of introducing grass. Concentrates need to be very specific to this freshly calved cow. Drummonds dairy rations contain an ideal balance of starch and soluble fibres that provide rapid energy for protein production in the rumen and slow-release energy for rumen health.

PROTEIN

Protein is critical in early lactation as cows are mobilising body fat but their ability to mobilise body protein is quite limited. An overall dietary protein of 17-19% is recommended, of which 30-35% of this should be ruminally undegraded. The inclusion of soya in our ration ensures a supply of quality ruminally undegraded protein. Protein always drives milk and is an appetite stimulant so it's advised to feed an 18-20% ration in early lactation.

Forage (kg of DM)	Concentrates (kg as fed)
Silage 70%DMD ad lib	7.5
8 grass + 3 silage	6
12 grass	4.5
13 grass	3.5

Note: as a rule of thumb, feed an extra 1kg of concentrates for every 2 litres of milk yield above 28 litres.

A culmination of a wet summer and an early winter have left some farmers under pressure with fodder supplies this spring. The wet summer has also meant silage quality isn't as high as many farmers would have liked, with many second and third cuts struggling. As a result of this many farmers will have to investigate ways to stretch their silage this spring which should also include making a feed plan specific to the animals being fed. Note: dairy cows will consume 12 kg DM / day.

When feeding meal to cows to stretch silage, it's important to make sure that silage is restricted. If silage is available ad lib along with some meal, then this will have little impact on reducing silage usage. When feeding the silage, you should know how many kgs DM is being fed per bale /grab and feed the required amount (as per feed plan) along with some meal. This should keep the cows full and happy. Drummonds have numerous different products that are ideal for stretching out rations. Our Drummonds Barley Beef ration is a low protein (9%) ration made up of 50% barley. This ration proves to be a cost-effective ration for stretching feed. Other rations such as our 15% protein ration (Beef 15) are options for stretching fodder with younger stock. If you are considering any of these options don't hesitate to contact your local Drummonds representative.

The following table from Teagasc outlines the quantities of silage and meals to feed with 50% and 75% of forage requirements available on farm.

	50% of forage available		75% of forage available	
	Silage allowance (kg)	Meal needed (kg)	Silage allowance (kg)	Meal needed (kg)
Dry dairy cow	25	3-4	38	2-3
Dry suckler (good condition)	20	2.5-3.0	30	0.5-1.0*
Suckler cow with calf	20	5-6	30	3-4
Store (500 kg) / Incalf heifer	20	3-4	30	2-3
Weanling	12	2-4	20	2-3

* thin cows may require additional meals

February Offers

Ends 29th Feb 2024



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