



# AGRONOMY UPDATE

Now is a good time to walk the fields and assess any (potential) problems which may have manifested over the course of the growing season. Weeds such as blackgrass, brome grasses, canary and scutch grass should be noted. A plan of action can then be created - which fields to harvest first/last (preventing spread of weeds), or potentially discarding certain areas of fields.

Blackgrass is becoming an increasing concern in Ireland, and can become a serious problem if ignored. Each plant can produce up to 6,000 seeds/m<sup>2</sup>. Tackling it now before it produces viable seed should be a priority. Hand roguing small areas will be beneficial, while burning off larger areas may be necessary. Consult your Drummonds Agronomist if you are unsure of identifying some grassweeds on your farm.



Canary Grass



Wild Oats



Sterile Brome

See below of a list of cultural methods to control weeds on your farm:

Cultural control options:

- Ploughing: to a depth of at least 6 inches to ensure inversion of the furrow, completely burying the seed.
- Allow for a wider or narrower headland when ploughing as accumulations tend to thrive where

the plough is lifted out at the headland. This is due to poor burial of the seeds in this particular area.

- Limit the spread of seeds by ensuring ALL machinery for example, harvesters, trailers, balers etc., are cleaned out properly before entering a new field. Blowing machinery down with an air compressor is one of the best ways to do this.
- Use certified seed: the Department of Agriculture and the Irish Seed Trade Association have adopted a zero – tolerance approach to invasive weed species. Certified seed is brome free.
- Rotation: a non-cereal break crop allows a wider range of herbicides to tackle the problem. A spring crop allows a stale seedbed over winter. Try to avoid continuous cereal crops. Also, as weed species germinate in different seasons, switching between spring and winter cropping can reduce the build-up of the weed seed bank.
- Shallow cultivate after harvest to encourage germination of seeds, once germinated spray with glyphosate; and then plough.
- Delaying drilling date.

We must do all we can to deal with weeds before searching for the solution from the can – this also prevents the build-up of herbicide resistance, and forms part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy.

### **Planning ahead for 2023**

With the majority of agronomy work now finished for 2022 cereal crops, now is a good time to start planning for the 2023 harvest.

Take note of problem areas on the farm, such as areas with weed infestations, those that need lime, fields that need to be sampled etc. Start to identify varieties suitable for your farm. Use both the AHDB and Department of Agriculture's Recommended Lists to see what Wheat, Barley, Oats, Beans and Oilseed Rape are available. Evaluate and compare strengths and weaknesses of varieties. Spread risk

by choosing a number of different varieties, not to place all of your eggs in one basket. Determine what rotation is needed and decide if you want to try new crops on the farm, such as Oilseed Rape or Beans.

### **New rules for 2022**

There are new green cover requirements for tillage land in 2022 as part of the new nitrates regulations. In essence, shallow cultivation of stubbles must take place within 7 days of harvesting of straw removal. Where straw is chopped, the land must also be shallow cultivated within 7 days to establish some green cover. These rules are now in place and will certainly prove challenging in terms of time constraints, labour and weather.

### **Oilseed Rape desiccation**

Applying glyphosate to your oilseed rape crop has a number of benefits – less green material at harvest, improved combine efficiency, and speeds up crop ripening.

Is your Oilseed Rape crop ready for pre-harvest glyphosate?

- Select a representative area of the crop and pick at random 20 pods from the middle of the main raceme.
- Open each of the pods. When you have noticed a change of colour from green to brown in at least 2/3 of the seeds in each pod, in at least 15 of the 20 pods collected, the crop is ready for glyphosate.
- Repeat the procedure in other parts of the field to ensure the assessment is accurate for the entire field.
- Don't forget to apply podstick with glyphosate.
- Ideally apply glyphosate to OSR when the moisture content is below 30% moisture.
- However, check market requirements for your oilseed rape before applying glyphosate!

# MANAGING RED CLOVER

The inclusion of red clover in grazing or cutting leys is a step towards improving whole farm feed efficiency in ruminant production systems. Clover plants are high in protein and therefore can reduce the need for bought in feed. Some producers are now growing exclusively red clover swards for both conservation and as a high protein finishing feedstuff which can be fed in-situ, but correct management must be employed to maximise its' productivity.



## How to manage red clover

Red clover needs careful management as it grows from a crown just above ground level, poor management will lead to this crown getting damaged and subsequently dying out of the sward. In a grazing situation, it must be remembered to leave slightly higher residuals (6-8cm) than with a grass ley. The same theory should be applied where conservation cuts are being taken on red clover swards. Red clover silage is a highly digestible and protein rich feedstuff, the aim should be to minimise turning before ensiling. Research has shown that as much as 5% of protein is lost with every turning of the crop where red clover dry matter (DM) levels are in excess of 30% (>30%DM). This can be attributed to 'leaf shatter' caused by the physical movement on the crop whilst wilting.

Red clover has a high buffering capacity. Buffering capacity notes the ability for the acidity or pH level to decrease to a desirable figure of 4 following a lactic acid fermentation. Using a silage additive for red clover silage is advisable, the purpose of silage additives is to control the preservation process so that by the time of feeding it has retained as many of the nutrients present in the original fresh forage as possible.

Red clover is primarily grown in a mixed sward, but increasingly it is being grown as a monoculture. Italian ryegrass, Hybrid ryegrass and Perennial ryegrass can all be sown as a companion species with red clover – it is advised to sow recommended varieties that are available from Drummonds.

Adding grass to the mix will enable greater carrying capacity, reduce poaching and crown damage to the red clover as well as improve the nutritional value of the sward.



## Home grown protein

Red clover swards are generally grown for high protein silage production, with aftermath grazing in the autumn. In terms of output, 10 -15 t/DM per hectare is achievable from red clover and companion grass swards, where soil indices and pH levels are fundamental to this. Crude protein content of red clover and ryegrass swards can be 5% - 6% higher than that of a pure ryegrass sward, allowing for increased animal

performance. Ruminants are often revered as poor users of protein but red clover can have a positive impact on this. 'Bypass protein' is a term often associated with red clover. Natural compounds (Polyphenol oxidase) within the red clover plant envelope protein compounds whilst in the rumen but these compounds are then broken down when they enter the 'true stomach' or abomasum where the pH is slightly lower. This allows for better utilisation of available protein.



## Animal performance

Using red clover can improve animal production due to its high nutritional value and superior digestibility, thus, leading to increased animal intakes.

Trials in AFBI show an increased dry matter intake of 1.6kg/DM day where cows were offered red clover/PRG silage vs. PRG silage only. Grazing trials have also shown a 25% increase in the daily growth rate of weaned lambs grazing red clover versus than ryegrass swards, resulting in fewer days to finishing.



## Establishing red clover

Red clover performs best in warm soils. Aim to sow when soil temperature is at least 10 °C.

For monoculture swards use 6 – 8 kg/acre.

For mixed swards use 3 – 4 kg/acre of red clover and 8 - 10kg/acre of grass.

Post emergence broad leaved weed spraying is not an option where red clover is in a sward. Ideally old swards should be sprayed off and given adequate time to die away before reseeding. Ploughing or minimum cultivation techniques can be used but a fine, firm seedbed should always be the goal.

Alternatively, perennial ryegrass can be sown in Spring with broad leaved weeds being sprayed out before stitching in red clover at a later stage.



# DRIVE YOUR ANIMAL'S PERFORMANCE THIS AUTUMN WITH DRUMMOND'S FEEDS

From mid June to late October, a substantial number of beef cattle will be slaughtered off grass. Slaughtering off grass has a number of advantages due to its lower cost of production with less meal input, cheaper weight gains off grass and heavier carcasses. Those killed in early summer generally benefit from a price rise also.

Pushing heavy cattle to finish off grass is economically attractive against the costs associated with winter housed feeding. Feeding meal on farms where grass supply is tight will benefit both on reducing grass demand and it is also said that

*"Carcass growth response to concentrate supplementation at pasture is higher where grass supply is low and where grass quality is poorer"*

Now is the time to assess your stock and decide which route to go with your heavier store cattle. Despite a lush leafy appearance of after grass, quality this time of the year is poorer compared to spring/summer grass. Dry matter content (typically 12-16%) and energy content are also reducing as the year progresses. Therefore, supplement to ensure a minimum of 1kg of liveweight gain per day is required to fill the void.

Response to feeding store cattle 4kg of meal at grass:

- Daily gain: +0.2-0.3kg/day
- Kill out: +0.5-1.5%
- Carcass: +35-40kg
- Confirmation: +0.2-0.8 unit increase
- Fat: 1.0-1.5 unit increase



## Meal feeding

Guidelines from feeding trials at Teagasc Grange indicate that there is an economic response to feeding 0.5 kg concentrates per 100kg liveweight (3kg to a 600kg steer) when grass is plentiful and 1kg concentrates per 100 kg liveweight (6kg to a 600kg steer) when grass is scarce. Autumn grass is very high in crude protein in the range 18-22%, so rations for finishing on grass should be of high energy ingredients e.g. cereals and pulps. Straight cereals such as rolled barley or mixes of barley/ wheat and maize by products are also suitable.

Drummonds have a broad range of top-quality coarse rations and cubes available from each of its branches. Please do not hesitate to contact your local advisor or branch.



# DRUMMONDS SPECIAL OFFERS - JULY 2022



**Titan Water Trough**  
30 Gallon - €70.00  
90 Gallon - €128.00



**Green Agri. 2 Ply Paper Rolls**  
6 Pack  
€37.00



**Xpert Dealer Boots**  
€50.00



**Acomec Injection**  
Injection 500ml - €32.00  
Pour On 1L - €34.00  
Pour On 5L - €95.00



**Black Disposable Gloves**  
100 Pack  
€20.00



**Formaline 25L**  
€53.00



**Headstart Garlic Summer Lick 18KG**  
€22.00



**Ectospec 500ml**  
€38.00



**Spot On 500ml**  
€64.00



## OATS OPEN DAY

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July at 11am

Drummonds Trial Site, Termonfeckin  
Drogheda, A92 P110

Contact our Drogheda branch  
for more information Tel: 041 983 8986



**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

