

| PASTURE SUMMIT 2018 - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS POSTED ON SLI.DO APP Day 1 – Session D – Brendan Horan, Teagasc, Moorepark | Event / Session |
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| <p>Question: How do you see the “threat” of synthetic foods?</p> <p>Answer: Similar to much of the plant based alternatives to dairy, nutritionally these alternatives are a poor substitute but that does not mean that we should be complacent. Our dairy industries need to work more effectively with the best human nutritionists to dispel the myths surrounding alt foods of all forms. The scientific evidence tells us that the qualities of nutrients from milk are significantly better and that these key differences are particularly important for at risk groups (such as growing infants, elderly people and pregnant women). Unfortunately, the nutritional inadequacies of such foods are substantial lacking many key nutrients while also containing others in less bioavailable forms.</p> | North Island - Session D |
| <p>Question: Is optimum or maximum the key to growing and utilizing pasture?</p> <p>Answer: I’m not sure there is a big difference between these. We aim to maximise pasture growth and achieve 85% pasture utilisation within our grazing systems by a keen focus on grazing at the correct leaf stage and keeping residuals at 3.5 to 4 cm across the grazing season with appropriate overall stocking rates and without mechanical intervention.</p> | North Island - Session D |
| <p>Question: Brendan, How do you balance growing 20 tonnes of pasture per hectare, and the higher stocking rate required to utilise this, with the environmental footprint?</p> <p>Answer: Again, to restate the point which has been proven in both Ireland and New Zealand studies – if animals are at an appropriate overall stocking rate that is consistent with, in this case, the relatively high grass growth capability of the farm and additional feed and fertilizer imports are not required and there should be no detrimental impact on N or C losses from the farm system.</p> | North Island - Session D |

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| <p>Question: Brendan's nutrient loss graph showed no difference due to stocking rate in Irish situation. What can NZ learn from this? Are we focusing on wrong measures?</p> <p>Answer: No, the results from studies undertaken in New Zealand are entirely consistent with the Irish findings again on the premise that no additional fertilizers or added feeds are required.</p> | <p>North Island - Session D</p> |
| <p>Question: Brendan - how do we address seasonality and changes in milk composition from a processing and customer perspective in grass based systems?</p> <p>Answer: As pasture-based industries we have to make out peace with the seasonality of milk supply. In Ireland, analysis by Laurence Shalloo has shown that the costs of flattening the supply curve at farm level would grossly outweigh any potential benefit in terms of value add fresh product that we might want to produce during offseason. In my view, increasingly differentiating higher value products from pasture will be worth far more to both our industries to more than compensate for any plant utilisation efficiencies.</p> | <p>North Island - Session D</p> |
| <p>Question: What do you see as the weakest link in the NZ farming system - environment, production, profitability, wintering systems, research?</p> <p>Answer: Much like Ireland, I think the NZ farm system is a comparative strength internationally but I think pasture-based dairy industries like ours need to do more to differentiate our products and better inform consumers.</p> | <p>North Island - Session D</p> |
| <p>Question: How is Ireland dealing with GHGs for agriculture what are farmers having to do at an on-farm level?</p> <p>Answer: Each farm has a Carbon footprint calculated as part of the Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme which they must complete every 18 months. This process identifies opportunities for them to make further reductions in C footprint. Teagasc has also recently launched an industry strategy to reduce emissions which can be viewed at the following link: https://www.teagasc.ie/publications/2018/agricultural-ghg-emissions-projections--and-mitigation-actions-to-2030.php</p> | <p>North Island - Session D</p> |

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| <p>Question: How do you farm resiliently without supplements when you get annual grass growth swings of between 4-8tDM/ha/yr?</p> <p>Answer: First and foremost, don't be overstocked to begin with!</p> <p>By having an appropriate overall stocking rate which is consistent with the general averages of pasture growth on the farm (and therefore generally requiring few supplements on average) you will at least minimise the need for additional purchased supplements or indeed the requirement to cull animals because growth is below expectation. While most farmers are happy to supplement animals during prolonged periods of pasture deficit, in my experience, they are slower to reduce demand by culling animals when it is needed. One of the most effective strategies to minimise the financial cost of lower than normal grass growth is to remove demand from the farm by culling early or selling surplus stock.</p> | North Island - Session D |
| <p>Question: Can proper utilisation of supplement increase the dm intake capabilities of the cow and thus augment the benefits of pasture?</p> <p>Answer: In theory yes, but as John pointed out in his presentation, this is difficult and complicated to achieve in practice. For the marginal benefits that can be achieved, the practical difficulty is too great in my view.</p> | North Island - Session D |
| <p>Question: As our genetic potential of our cows increases should we drop our stocking rate in a system 1 or 2?</p> <p>Answer: Again, that will depend on what stocking rate you are currently at. I see no justification to drop stocking rate below 85 kg live weight per tonne of DM available in the farm system even with high BW cows. Previous studies in Ireland show that the economic advantage of high EBI/BW animals is comparably greater at higher stocking rates. You should do nothing that reduces pasture utilisation as a general rule as this will be unprofitable.</p> | North Island - Session D |
| <p>Question: What is driving N leaching and what can be done to reduce it?</p> <p>Answer: The main causes of N leaching are from the excessive use of N fertilizers and protein supplements in pasture systems in general.</p> | South Island - Session D |

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| <p>Question: In Ireland in pasture based farms what do you do with your cows in the winter? In an NZ context what do we do with cows in Southland?</p> <p>Answer: Most dairy cows are housed during winter on Irish dairy farms. These facilities cost in the region of €600-€1,000 per cow including slurry storage in Ireland. From what I have seen, comparable facilities in New Zealand are very expensive and uneconomic. Cheaper alternatives are required and can achieve much of the same benefits without such prohibitive costs.</p> | South Island - Session D |
| <p>Question: Applying N,P,K,S - little and often through the season. Good idea?</p> <p>Answer: Great idea provided soil fertility is adequate. Where there is inadequate soil fertility the best option is to fix it immediately.</p> | South Island - Session D |