



Slurry spreading rule changes

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## Latest COVID-19 wave is major challenge



As we start 2022, the Omicron wave of COVID-19 has seen record case numbers on the island.

Although hospitalisations are remaining steady thanks in no small part to the success of the vaccination programme, the new wave is a threat to everyone in society. Positive COVID cases as well as close contacts are having an impact on our farms and the processing of your high-quality milk into world-renowned products.

Keeping yourself, your family and the Lakeland Dairies business safe and operational has never been as important or as challenging.

By working together we will get through this latest surge.

Everyone at Lakeland Dairies is committed to keeping our staff, farm families, hauliers and customers safe.

### HOW TO KEEP SAFE

We have previously written to you, the Lakeland Dairies farmers, to keep you informed and updated on what is happening in the business while also offering tips and advice on how to keep safe on your farm.

We have devised strict protocols around the collection of milk as well as the delivery of feed and fertiliser

to your yard. These protocols might seem restrictive but it is absolutely critical that you follow them.

They are not aimed to be disruptive to your everyday activity on the farm.

They are in place to keep you, your family and everyone involved in the running of your farm safe as well as ensuring the hygienic collection and processing of milk.

Please continue to:

- Wash your hands regularly.
- Do not come in contact with your milk collection or feed / fertiliser haulier.
- Sanitise the areas that you and your milk haulier come in contact with such as the dairy door handles, the bulk tank, etc.

• Have a source of soap, hot water, paper towels and a bin for your milk collection or feed / fertiliser haulier to thoroughly wash their hands. By following these simple steps, you will greatly reduce the spread of COVID-19.

If you or anyone in your family / the running of your farm becomes infected with COVID-19, contact Member Relations on 028 3026 2311 **IMMEDIATELY** where your situa-

tion will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

Your haulier has received training and advice on how to safely collect milk from farms that have a case of COVID-19.

### STORES AND FEED

You will have noticed recently that we have also stepped up our strong policy of social distancing across our network of Agri Stores, where Perspex screens have been installed to keep you and all staff safe.

This is on top of clear protocols in place aimed at halting the spread of COVID-19 at our stores.

This is to ensure that our Agri Stores and feed mill remain operational. Informative videos have been produced outlining the contact distancing protocols in place at the Lakeland Agri stores and around the collection of milk.

You can view the videos on [www.lakeland.ie](http://www.lakeland.ie) or [www.facebook.com/LakelandAgri](http://www.facebook.com/LakelandAgri)

We will continue to keep you informed as we work our way through this situation. It is difficult for everyone but by continuing to stay apart, we are working together for a better future.



By working together we will get through this latest surge

# Lakeland Agri Soil Sustainability Programme

Sean McMahon, Product & Marketing Manager, Grassland Agro

The Lakeland Agri Soil Sustainability Programme is a partnership between Lakeland Agri and Grassland Agro, tailored to address the soil health challenges facing Lakeland Dairies suppliers. The objective of this programme is to maintain output with reduced chemical fertiliser inputs.

The strategy employed to achieve this objective is to improve soil health across all three pillars.

- Chemical (soil fertility)
- Physical (soil structure)
- Biological (soil bacteria)

Achieving this objective will significantly increase the sustainability of suppliers' farms economically, environmentally and socially. The starting point on each individual farm is to first measure and then benchmark participating farms.

Every farm is different, taking a farm specific approach to soil health is fundamental to the programme. Lakeland Agri's in-house Technical Department headed by Alan Hurst, work closely with Grassland Agro advisors to develop the most suitable programme for each farm.

The programme is entering its second year and is open for more farmers to join.

Over the first year of the programme data has been collected from Lakeland suppliers.

The main findings can be seen below

- 18% of soil samples are below pH6
- 29% of soil samples are Index 1 & 2 for Phosphorus (P)



- 39% of soil samples are Index 1 & 2 for Potassium (K)
- Average silage yields are 6.3T per acre
- Average CO2 burst is 174 (range from 50-200)
- Average Labile Nitrogen is 353kg N/Ha (range 178-443)

The average statistics in the most recent soil fertility report highlights that only 41% of dairy farms had soils at optimum pH, 48% had soils that were suboptimal (Index 1 or 2) for Phosphorus (P) and 41% had soils suboptimal for Potassium (K).

From the 11,000 acres soil sampled for participating farmers who joined the programme in 2021, soil pH is well ahead of the national average

This highlights the brilliant work carried out by Lakeland suppliers in soil

testing and regular lime application.

The Soil Sustainability Programme equips each participant with a detailed field specific fertiliser programme, which utilises the right product, in the right place, at the right rate and the right time.

This is carried out in conjunction with the farmer so that practical considerations are factored in. Each farmer is supported on the programme throughout the year.

**THE LAKELAND AGRI SOIL SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME IS OPEN TO ALL FARMERS.**

**PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL LAKE-LAND AGRI TECHNICAL SALES REPRESENTATIVE OR ALAN HURST ON +353 87 2901663. OR CALL OUR CUSTOMER SERVICES CENTRE ON 028 302 62311.**

## Tackling digital dermatitis

Is digital dermatitis a problem on your farm this winter?

If so, routine foot bathing is the most practical and effective method of control. Without regular foot bathing, the incidence of digital dermatitis will increase weekly during the winter.

Ideally, provide a double footbath; a bath to wash feet, followed by a treatment bath.

The wash bath removes manure which reduces the effectiveness of the chemical in the treatment bath. Depending on the level of manure, cleanliness of the cow's feet and floor before entry, the pre-wash footbath may need to be changed during milking.

If using a pre-wash bath allow one cow length between the pre-wash and treatment baths, along with good drainage to remove excess water.

If there is not enough space to fit in

both baths, wash the cows' feet with a hose before they leave the parlour on the way out to the foot bath.

To allow time for good chemical penetration, the cow needs to take at least three strides through the treatment bath. The bath must therefore be at least three metres long.

Fill the bath to a depth of 10 cm to ensure the foot is covered up to the top of the hoof.

Accurately measure the amount of chemical required. This includes topping up.

Dilute mixes are not as effective and more concentrated mixes may damage cows feet.

The frequency of treatment depends on the incidence of infection. The minimum regime is to foot bath after four consecutive milkings each week to minimise digital dermatitis in milking cows.

## Electricity usage

Electricity prices are a major bill on a dairy farm. There is generally scope on most farms to reduce electricity usage.

Make sure you are on the best tariff available. Electricity suppliers offer larger energy users more competitive rates. Change time clocks when required. Cheaper electricity in winter is from 1 am to 8 am. Dairy farms typically use 20-30% of their electricity at the low rate.

Ensure your plate cooler has an adequate water supply.

Well insulated hot water tanks and pipes save money. A 30 mm layer of insulation greatly reduces this heat loss. Ensure that thermostat settings do not allow the water to boil.

Installing low energy bulbs is a good option.

LED lighting is an economic option where lights are used several hours a day.



# Nitrates Action Programme – Slurry spreading rule changes you need to know



Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS) must be used from 1st February 2022 on farms with 200 or more cattle livestock units (LU). This will affect up to 1,100 farms in Northern Ireland (NI).

How to calculate livestock units is set out below:

STOCK TYPE	LIVESTOCK UNIT (LU)
DAIRY COWS	1.0
BREEDING BULL	1.0
CATTLE OVER 2 YEARS	0.8
CATTLE 1-2 YEARS	0.6
CALVES UNDER 1 YEAR	0.4

For example, a 150-cow dairy herd with 60 in calf heifers (1-2yrs) and 60 maiden heifers/calves (0-1yrs) will have the following;

150 dairy cows @ 1LU	= 150 LU
60 1-2-year-olds @ 0.6LU	= 36 LU
60 0-1 years-olds @ 0.4LU	= 24 LU
Total LU	= 210 LU

Where it is not practical to spread on a field using LESSE due to slope, slurry can be spread using an inverted splash plate on that field. A record of the field number and the reason for spreading using a splash plate must be kept for inspection.

Using LESSE can lead to increased nitrogen availability, increased yields, and improved accuracy of application, reduced odour, reduced phosphorus run-off and potential savings on chemical nitrogen fertiliser.

Spring is when nitrates are rapidly taken up by actively growing crops and the nitrates in the slurry are most available.

Nitrogen in manures is also lost as ammonia gas (NH<sub>3</sub>) from spreading on land. Low Emission Slurry Spreading Equipment (LESSE) can help to reduce losses of ammonia and therefore Nitrogen. Band spreading, trailing shoe and injector systems are all available to reduce ammonia losses at spreading time.

Cattle slurry at 6% dry matter contains the following levels of

readily available nutrients:

- Nitrogen: 1.0 kg/m<sup>3</sup> (10 units N per 1000 gallons)
- Phosphate: 0.6 kgs/m<sup>3</sup> if soil is index 0 or index 1 (5.5 units P per 1000 gallons)
- Phosphate 1.2kg/m<sup>3</sup> if soil is index 2 or above (11 units P per 1000 gallons)
- Potash: 2.9 g/m<sup>3</sup> (28 units K per 1000 gallons)

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

• From 1st February it is possible to spread slurry and manure on land as long as ground conditions allow. Avoid spreading slurry if the ground is frozen, water-logged or heavy rain is forecast.

• Farmers and contractors should also be aware of the rules for spreading slurry during February when there is an increase in the width of buffer zones required along waterways and a reduction in the maximum application rates allowed.

- Leave a buffer zone:
  - a. 15m from a waterway (increased from 10m) and
  - b. 30m from a lake (increased from 20m).
  - c. 5m from a waterway (increased from 3m) if Low emission slurry spreading equipment (LESSE) is used.

• The maximum volume of slurry which can be spread per hectare in one application is reduced from 50m<sup>3</sup>/ha (4500 gallons per acre) to 30m<sup>3</sup>/ha (2750gallons per acre) in the month of February.

• Buffer zone and maximum application rate requirements will revert back to the original distances and volumes from 1 March onwards until 1 October. Slurry exports

## SLURRY EXPORTS

Many farmers export slurry and if you do, you must submit your records online by 31st January for the previous year (2021).

Some of the information you need to include in the submission are the volume of slurry transported, the type of slurry exported as well as the contractor's name and details and the destination of the slurry exported. All details will have to be logged with the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency (NIEA).

## How is your cooling equipment performing?

Ensuring you complete regular simple checks of your bulk milk tank can avoid major quality problems. Milk must be stored under 4°C to keep bacteria levels low and prevent milk spoilage.

Common bulk tank problems can be a broken compressor or agitator; a tank being low on gas; inadequate power or a power failure, but the highest bacteria counts usually relate

to a tank of milk which has been accidentally left off overnight or for a number of hours. Investing in a plate cooler and increasing a focus on wash routines will minimise any TBC issues.

### BULK TANK CHECKLIST

- Check the tank is turned on after each and every milking.
- Are there visible 'butter lumps' form-

ing on the surface of the milk? That is generally a sign that agitation or cooling capacity is not correct.

- If you forget to turn on the bulk tank for any duration, don't put 'good' milk in on top of milk that has been stored uncooled overnight. Get the milk checked out first.
- Has your bulk tank been serviced recently?

# Milk fever - avoid the hidden costs



If a cow develops milk fever clinical or sub-clinical, it increases her risk of several other metabolic issues and more. These all affect the cow's milk production but also the cow's fertility and success at breeding.

This will affect the profitability of that animal going forward.

As calving starts it is important to monitor cows and ensure that there are no issues.

If you notice any problems once calving starts seek advice straight away to prevent issues occurring with other cows.

Milk Fever is caused when the calcium levels in the blood are too low. Nearly all dairy cows will experience some degree of low blood calcium after calving.

The severity and duration will determine whether the cow will stay standing and the impact on her health.

Clinical milk fever, where the cow is down after calving is a disaster for the cow as well as the farmer, and the race is on to get the animal standing again.

## LARGESCALE IMPACT

Subclinical milk fever is where the cow stays standing but experiences a prolonged low blood calcium. This problem can affect a large proportion of the herd, with or without cows going down with clinical milk fever.

Low blood calcium will result in the cow's immune function and muscle function being impaired, this can result in a whole host of other problems like re-

tained cleanings, uterine infections, mastitis, reduced dry matter intake resulting in negative energy balance, ketosis, loss of body condition and displaced abomasum.

## PREVENTION IS KEY

Milk Fever occurs if there is too much calcium in the diet prior to calving, the body can't metabolise enough calcium out of the bone and the diet is not sufficient to provide the calcium when the cow has calved.

Ensure that cows have reduced levels of calcium in the diet until they begin to bag up, at this stage the extra calcium should not have a negative effect.

Ensure cows get an adequate level of magnesium supplement 20-25g Mg, you may need to increase this if there are previous milk fever issues or if cows begin to calve down with milk fever.

Test silage for potassium, high K silage will affect the level of Magnesium available which will affect calcium absorption.

Cows that are out grazing prior to calving will also need to be monitored especially if slurry has gone out.

Try to calve cows in the correct BCS, cows with a BCS >3.5 are more likely to be affected by Milk fever and other metabolic issues.

This is another reason to test silage, so cows are not over fed in the dry period.

## TREATMENT

Inject, as soon as possible, with a

bottle of calcium under the skin. If it's a particularly bad case of milk fever, injection into a vein may be necessary but this should be left to a veterinarian as it can cause sudden death if not carried out properly.

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## Contact

The Lakeland Dairies Member Relations Division works closely with all our milk producers to help drive profitability at farm level as well as providing information on the progress of the Society.

Contact us by calling  
0818 47 47 20 (ROI)  
or 028 3026 2311  
(NI).