



February 2021

MILK INFORMATION

MILK SUPPLY

January 2021 Milk Supply: 2.97 million litres.
January 2020 Milk Supply: 3.03 million litres
This represents a 2% decrease on 2020.
Milk supply for February to date is up by 3%.

MILK PRICE

The base price for January has been increased by 0.5 cent per litre. This gives a price, including SCC bonus and VAT, of 34.2 cents per litre for the month. It continues to include a 1 cent per litre contribution from the Volatility Fund.

The average prices paid for the month, based on the average constituents of 4.38% butterfat and 3.43% protein, are as follows –

Variable =	38.06
Fixed Milk 4 =	36.79
Fixed Milk 5 =	36.13
Fixed Milk 6 =	37.53
Average Price =	38.04

DAIRY MARKETS

Dairy markets have been steady to positive over the past month. Cheddar prices, the important one for West Cork, have moved very little since the Autumn and the outlook is the same for the next few months. Strong retail demand is compensating to a fair degree for the lock down in food service. Strong U.S. supply is the biggest threat to the market.

Both butter and skim powder prices improved in January and have stabilized again in the past few weeks.

SELECTIVE DRY COW THERAPY

As mentioned last month, 2021 is an important year for farmers in preparing for the new legislation on veterinary medicines that will be implemented in January 2022. It will mean that antibiotics can no longer be used without evidence of infection.

The reason for this is that there is mounting pressure on all sectors of society to reduce antibiotic use, due to the global threat from the emergence of antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria. Antimicrobial resistance is not only a threat to livestock but also to public health, with an estimated 700,000 people dying globally of drug resistant infections every year. If nothing is done, this figure could rise to 10 million people by 2050. Dairy farmers are being encouraged to practice selective dry cow therapy (SDCT) in a bid to minimise the use of antibiotics at drying off.

Understandably, many farmers are concerned about moving away from blanket dry cow therapy. To help allay these fears and help you prepare for this transition, we are profiling some farmers who have already been practicing SDCT for some time, and to find out what they do to ensure its success. You might be wondering why we are speaking about drying off cows at this stage of the year, but the whole lactation is important to ensure a successful dry period, and what you do now is important for the drying off period at the end of the year.

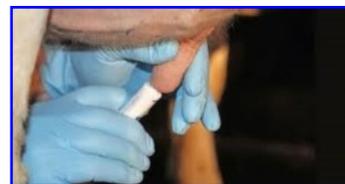
John Fitzgerald, who milks nearly 200 cows near Mallow in Co Cork with his son-in-law Vincent Hennessy (pictured right) started practising SDCT three years ago.



John said “Our initial motivation to do so was for economic reasons but we soon saw additional benefits, like not having to worry about the risk of antibiotic residues in the tank post calving.

We started SDCT with a small number of cows but as our confidence grew we now do about 75% of the herd. We were pleasantly surprised that there was no increase in cows calving with a high cell count. We found that restricting treatment to ‘higher risk’ cows cut unnecessary use of antibiotics and saved us money, with no threat to udder health.”

He emphasised the importance of hygiene at drying off and of selecting the correct cows that don’t need antibiotics. “We do this by milk recording at least 4 times a year and recording any clinical case throughout the year on a whiteboard in the parlour. Then we transfer this information later to our Herdwatch package when we’re not so busy. We’ll do our first milk recording of the year in the next couple of weeks. This will give us accurate information about what’s going on in the herd. It also shows us how successful our last dry period was, by comparing SCC values before and after calving.



When picking cows that are suitable for SDCT, we pick those that have an SCC of 100,000 or less. During the dry period we put a lot of emphasis on keeping the cubicles clean and dry by liming twice a day and we also teat spray the heifers every second day for the last 3 weeks before they calve”

We will come back to John and Vincent later in the Spring for an update, and to look at other things they are doing throughout the year to be ready for the drying off in 2021.

LISAVAIRD FARMS

We are currently milking 75 cows, 48 autumn and 27 spring calvers. They are averaging 26 ltr/day at 4.12% B.F. And 3.41% P (month to date) which equates to 2 kgs of MS/head/day. SCC is at 67, TBC at 9, Thermodurics at 210 and TCMs at 2 so all ticking along nicely for now. Diet remains the same with 2 kgs of fodder beet D.M. and between 3 - 7 kg of a 21% CP ration being fed at milking (depending on yield).



A grass walk on February 1st showed we had an average farm cover of 1,039 kgs/ha, a good as we have had opening in recent years. Roughly 6 kgs DM/ha/day growth since closing cover on December 1st but most of this growth occurred in December. Badly broken weather has prevented any fertilizer or slurry being spread on the milking platform yet and this is now becoming obvious with growth at a standstill and grass yellowing on the tips. That said, we have managed about 10 grazings by day, with the spring calvers so far, great to get these girls out for a stretch and relieve the pressure on housing for a while. There is, however, no chance that we will manage to have 30% of the farm grazed by the end of February (Teagasc recommendation).

A.I. For next autumn finished up on February 10th, which should give a calving finish date of November 20th. It seems to have gone quite well with a 68% non return rate, so far but we will have to wait for scanning in early march to confirm this.

One useful gadget to have this time of year is a milk warmer. It allows us to heat any collected milk/milk replacer we need, heat it to the desired temperature and feed at any time, ensuring calves get warm milk no matter when we get to feed them. We find it much easier to train calves to drink when milk is on the hot side of warm.



January rainfall 220mls, February to 16th 170 mls.

As we move into the second half of February, with half the cows calved and the days getting longer, the sight of unopened bags of fertilizer is starting to become irritating. Here’s hoping for a settled spell when we can all get back out onto the land again.