

## Tipperary Dairy Farmer Focuses on Early Lactation Management to Drive Farm Success in 2017

Donal Maher, a dairy farmer from Drangan in south Tipperary will calve 170 Friesian dairy cows this spring; an increase of 20 since 2016. The herd, who are grazing a block of 75Ha, yielded an **average of just over 5,900Lt while maintaining high milk solids of 477kg per cow in 2016.**

Approaching a point where his grassland potential is nearly maximised, Donal looked at cost effective ways to improve his farms profitability by using bought and home grown feed. To achieve this he began working closely with Michael Cleary, a Nutritionist from Specialist Nutrition, who he has been working with for over ten years now. Through an increased focus on nutritional management, Donal and Michael have improved farm performance in a sustainable and profitable way; **growing cow numbers from 37 to today's 170 strong herd.** Achieving this strong farm growth while also sustaining impressive fertility rates and increasing yields, has proven that it can be accomplished in a very profitable way.

### 2016 Fact File

- ✓ 150 Friesian Herd
- ✓ 5,935 Lt Average Yield
- ✓ 477kg Milk Solids
- ✓ 370 Day Calving Interval
- ✓ 10% Average Increase in Intakes

### Performance and Fertility Can Go Together

Ensuring cows reach their yield potential while maintaining strong milk solids throughout the year is the key principle Donal and Michael have worked together to achieve. The successful formula has been to provide Donal's cows with a balanced, high energy diet once they calve through a combination of grass silage, wholecrop cereals, straights and **Liquigold**. Body condition scoring is constantly monitored along with milk solids. Feed is then manipulated to suit conditions whether cows are housed fulltime during the winter or are buffer fed during the spring and autumn grazing months.

Donal states that *"It's vital to feed your cow well in the first 12 weeks after calving. Through this focus, I've been able to manage a tight calving interval of under 370-days in the past few years, even with some of the poor springs we've experienced"*. Paying close attention to nutrition during this critical period enabled Donal to achieve an **impressive 74% cows calved within a 6-week period** last year.

Michael Cleary explains that *"In early lactation it is essential to provide a high energy, palatable diet during the breeding season and up to 60 days in calf to increase dry matter intakes and minimise body condition loss. This is achieved by using products like Liquigold, wholecrop and a choice of straights, then balancing them correctly in terms of nutrition and mineral content."*

During the crucial spring period, Donal says; *"I am in regular contact with Michael, who advises me on diet adjustments until all animals are fully grazing on grass."*

“ Before using Liquigold I experienced greater fluctuations in herd body condition loss. ”



### Herd Nutritional Management

Detailed analysis and management of his herd's diet has been the key to Donal and Michael's success in maximising farm profitability. Specifically, once the cows calve down, Donal feeds a forage based diet; which provides fibre, high energy and dilutes the protein to complement spring grass. Once the Dry Matter increases in later spring grass, Donal eases off buffer feeding to rely more heavily on his grazing platform and a small amount of parlour concentrate. He then limits this homemade parlour concentrate to a 2kg feeding rate throughout the lactation period. Managing his herds nutritional programme in this way allows Donal to make high quality first cut grass silage in early May, without conflicting with fresh grass demands from the milking herd.

**Liquigold**, at 1.5kg per head, has particularly helped his management of the herds body conditioning throughout the buffer feeding period *"Before using Liquigold I experienced greater fluctuations in herd body condition loss. I have now reduced this loss after calving, which in turn has helped to*

increase submission rates; especially at the early stages of the breeding season. I credit this to an increased intake of up to 10% due to **Liquigold's** palatability, along with the balance of protein and energy that **Liquigold** provides in the diet."

Michael agrees explaining that "**Liquigold** helps to blend the overall TMR mix together to minimise sorting, and guarantees cows are feeding at a consistent rate for the entire day."

Another product Donal uses is **Vistacell**; a high density live yeast additive that increases the growth of beneficial rumen bacteria, which removes oxygen from the rumen. He describes that "since using **Vistacell** I've noticed the cows dung is a lot more consistent and I've seen less cases of soft dung throughout the whole herd. I can also visibly see a better fill in cows and they appear to be more content."

In addition, **Vistacell** enables cows to settle better into the introduction of new ingredients in their diets, like spring grass, while still maintaining relatively high levels of dry feed.



“ I have absolute control over my herds diet, while continuing to drive farm profitability ”

### Working Together

Donal says "Working with Michael from Specialist Nutrition has enabled me to review my full nutritional programme to ensure I have absolute control over my herds diet, while continuing to drive farm profitability. As we all know, no two springs are the same so I need to have flexibility within my nutritional plan while ensuring I deliver a consistent performance. This, along with using **Liquigold** and **Vistacell**, has improved my herds performance and overall herd health; giving me a more sustainable farming enterprise and a big increase in farm profitability."

Donal is looking forward to the challenge of the upcoming spring, and with the help of Michael Cleary, will be working hard to manage his herds nutrition to ensure maximum farm profitability in 2017.

## LIQUIGOLD

A great way to increase the palatability of feeds whilst contributing good levels of energy and protein.

LIQUIGOLD - is a liquid feed made from molasses, syrup and CMS. It is also suitable for inclusion in the diets of all ruminant livestock and can offer a very cost effective way to feed.



#### Key benefits:

- Palatable high energy liquid blend
- Contains high levels of quality sugar and protein
- Provides sugar in two forms; sucrose and glucose
- Helps to promote high dry matter intakes
- Ideal for binding dusty or mealy ingredients in your TMR

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Available in lots of 10 tonne or greater.



**Michael Cleary Nutritionist:** Recommended to all stock that is being fed indoors or fed with a feeder wagon. This increases your intakes by giving you far superior digestion. This happens because the live yeast cells are increased inside the rumen which consume any excess oxygen and help keep lactic acid levels at bay. It is absolutely essential for both beef finishing diets and dairy buffer diets.

- Supplies more live yeast cells than other yeast products
- Removes oxygen to improve the rumen environment
- Increases fibre digesting bacteria, to improve rumen efficiency
- Increases lactic acid utilising bacteria, improving feed efficiency

### SPECIALIST NUTRITION TEAM



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