

# Co. Down & South Armagh Clover Monitor Farm

## Summary of group meeting – 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010

Approximately 20 members attended the evening at the Co. Down and South Armagh Monitor Farm. The evening focused on measuring grass growth on the farm as well as how the reseeding and sward management at the outfarm, near Finnis, has been progressing.

### Progress to date since last meeting

- 8 acres reseeded mid May using 2 different stitching machines
  - Grass mix includes Dromore, Dunloy, Malone, Navan and Crusader.
- A further 7 acres (Field 18 @ Finnis) has been ploughed due to severe poaching over the past 2 years and sown out with the same grass mix.
- 6 acres of silage ground will be reseeded with a 1/3 tetraploid, 2/3 diploid mix and red clover. It has now been sprayed with round up. Sheep will graze and then grass to be stitched in.

### 1. Grass Growth on the monitor Farm

Grazing swards have been measured regularly over the season from April and will continue on until October. As the farm is split into 3 blocks, it has been possible to compare the young swards against older swards on farm. A rising platometer is used to measure grass growth, with the readings used to calculate grazing days ahead on farm.

### Comparison of daily growth rate on the 3 blocks of grazing ground

	Kg DM/day	Kg DM/day	Kg DM/day	Kg DM/day	Kg DM/day
	24/5/10	7/6/10	21/6/10	5/7/10	19/7/10
Finnis	55	80	55	46	42
Owens	95	107	85	48	105
Home	33	50	50	50	62

- At a stocking rate of 3 cows/ha – would require a typical daily requirement of 50kg DM grass/day, 12 ewes/ha would require 39kg grass DM/ha.
- The swards at Owens are all young grass, about 3 – 4 year old swards and have only received 50 units of nitrogen.
- No fertiliser has been applied to these swards since April, yet growth is still well ahead of the other swards.
- The rotational grazing and low fertiliser use has definitely benefited clover growth.
- There was a demonstration of the different heights that grass should be for grazing of cattle and sheep. These plots represented the height (grass cover) to graze down to before removing stock from a field, as well as the entry heights for livestock to start grazing at.

### Comparison of average grazing covers on the 3 blocks of grazing ground

	Kg DM/day	Kg DM/day	Kg DM/day	Kg DM/day	Kg DM/day	Kg DM/day
	10/5/10	24/5/10	7/6/10	21/6/10	5/7/10	19/7/10
Finnis	1817	2377	2716	2304	2242	2192
Owens	2522	2928	3093	2791	2271	3069
Home	1621	1999	2596	2233	2175	2451

- Calculate grazing days ahead to ensure best response from grass.
- Target 14 -15 days ahead, building up to 20 -21 days by mid August.
- At present, there are 15 days ahead of grazing at both Finnis and the Home farm, with 21 days ahead at the Owens block of ground.

Approximate target grazing heights

- 4cm = 1600 kg DM/ha – remove stock by this point
- 6 - 8cm = 2600 kg DM/ha – ideal grazing height for sheep
- 10 -12cm = 3000kg DM/ha – ideal grazing height for cattle

### Feed value of grazed grass on farm

Three samples were taken from the fields viewed on the night and analysed for feed quality. The results are as follows:

	Field 5 Stitched sward	Field 7 Full reseed	Field 9 Old sward	N.I. Average	Typical Store Ration
Dry Matter %	12.5%	13%	14.7%	15%	88%
Crude Protein %	21.4%	21.3%	20.9%	17%	16%
Sugars %	10.5%	9.6%	9.5%	12%	8%
Energy Mj ME/kg DM	11.4	11.1	10.8	11.2	12.6

### Stop 1 – Shamrock Field (Field 5 Finnis = 4.4 acres)

- pH 6.2 P & K = 1 .approx 2600 kg DM/ha
- Field was reseeded in April 2009 by grazing bare with sheep and drilled with Einbock at 1 bag/acre of
  - 2.5 kg Glen – Intermediate
  - 2kg Dunluce – Intermediate
  - 3kg Tyrella – Late
  - 2.5kg Pastour – Late
  - 2.5kg Dunloy – Late

- 0.5kg Motim - Timothy
  - 1kg Ensign Clover mix
- Cattle grazed field in March.
- Silage cut late June – Field was slurried on 5<sup>th</sup> July at 1500 gal/acre.

#### **Point of Action**

- The group were impressed with the success of the reseed. The quality and quantity of perennial ryegrass and white clover was excellent given that the old grass had not be burned off prior to stitching in.
- The field would provide ideal grazing for the store heifers, with the possibility of grazing lambs alongside them to reach slaughter weights sooner.
- Field should continue to be grazed tight to 4cm before moving on to maintain grass quality in the regrowth.
- Making use of an electric fence to split the field in 2 paddocks would make better use of the grass.
- No further fertiliser would be needed, although if so desired, a half bag of N (14 units) could be used in August to give a late flush of grass.

#### **Stop 2 – Field 9 (5.5 Acres)**

- This sward gave the group members an idea of the type of swards that were present on the farm before any reseeding.
- Topping of grass and tighter grazing has thickened the sward out.
- As it is a central field on the farm, closing for a full reseed isn't a viable option as creates problems in moving stock rotationally.
- Although there is no plan to reseed in the near future, methods for improving sward were discussed by the group
  - Stitching was an option after burning off and winter grazing to open the sward
  - Soil aeration will be carried out this year using the shakerator.
  - Grazing system of rotational grazing and topping should continue

#### **Stop 3 –Park Field Centre (Field 7 – 5.5 acres)**

- pH = 5.8                      P = 2    K = 0
- Field was drained, sprayed and conventionally reseeded in September 2009.
- Grass mix was
  - 3kg Spelga – Intermediate ryegrass (diploid)
  - 4kg Tyrella – Late ryegrass (tetraploid)
  - 2kg Dunluce – Intermediate ryegrass (diploid)
  - 3kg Dunloy – Late ryegrass (tetraploid)
  - 2kg Ensign clover mix – (Crusader, Barblanca & Alice)
- Field predominantly grazed by sheep to encourage tillering.
- Field received slurry in July and nitrogen in April along with some grass seed.

#### **Point of Action**

- The group agreed the field was a successful reseed despite the winter conditions.

- The field should continue to be grazed tight this year to further encourage tillering of grass and clover.
- As the field is low in potash, some additional fertiliser would be of benefit. Ideally slurry or FYM should be used later in autumn.
- The field will be used for silage next year, but will be grazed in at least 2 rotations from March before closing off.