Co-operative News

Summer 2026

Centenary Thurles
Co-operative Society Ltd

Welcome to the June edition of Co-operative News!

With this newsletter we are committed to giving you updates in Centenary Thurles every quarter. We want to keep you informed of what's going on in the Society – whether that is new developments in the technology we use, new products we are launching or challenges we are helping our stakeholders with. We also want to give advice on topical issues in agriculture and encourage a sustainable practice within our community.

Follow us for all the latest news in Centenary Thurles:

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Appointment of CEO Designate

Last April our Chairman Mr. Paddy Daly, confirmed the appointment of Mr. John Kealy as Chief Executive Designate of Centenary Thurles Co-Op. Mr. Kealy, who hails from Ballylinan Co. Laois and was most recently Head of Agri Operations at Tirlán, took up his role from Monday 13th April 2026. He is the holder of a BSc in Agricultural Science from UCD and an MBA from UCD Smurfit Business School.

Commenting on his appointment, Mr. Kealy said he was keenly anticipating working with the team at Centenary Thurles and building on the strong foundations already in place. He is looking forward to engaging with all stakeholders in the business and hopes to explore and uncover some exciting development opportunities for Centenary Thurles.

Centenary Thurles Co-Op reported Annual Turnover for 2025 of €150m and Net Assets (or Members' Funds) of almost €80m. It celebrated 125 years in business back in 2023 and prides itself on the success of its Dairy, Agri and Home & Garden divisions.

Towards the end of 2026, Mr. Kealy will succeed Mr. Joe Kerrigan as Chief Executive Officer on his retirement from that role. Mr. Kerrigan has served as CEO for the last 17 years, in a career with Centenary Thurles Co-Op that has extended to in excess of 33 years. In welcoming the new appointment, he referenced the strength of Centenary Thurles and its importance to the local economy. He expressed confidence that our well-invested Society is ready to transition to its next phase of growth and development.

Pictured; John Kealy

Milk Price Outlook 2026

The anticipated slow-down in global milk supply growth has not yet materialised — supply in the EU grew by more than 4% for the first quarter of the year; New Zealand growth for their supply year just coming to an end is reported to be close to 3% and the US continues to grow its output — up in excess of 3% for the first quarter.

A strong recovery in milk price is dependent on slowing growth and that is not evident as yet. The recent base of 37c does appear to put a floor under the price for the year as markets do appear reasonably stable at present. Based on 2025 constituents, that would translate into an average price for the year of 42.50c.

Milk Volumes YTD 2026

Despite the inclement weather in the Spring, we are pleased to see that milk volumes supplied have held up reasonably well. At the end of April, we had similar volumes supplied in 2026 as in 2025 — just over 49m litres and from 7 fewer suppliers.

At the time of composing this article, May volumes are running slightly behind those for 2025. We remain optimistic that any supply decline for 2026 might be minimal. That optimism is founded on a hoped-for gradual increase in milk price throughout the year and favourable weather conditions for October/ November — neither of which can be predicted with any great certainty as of yet.

AGM

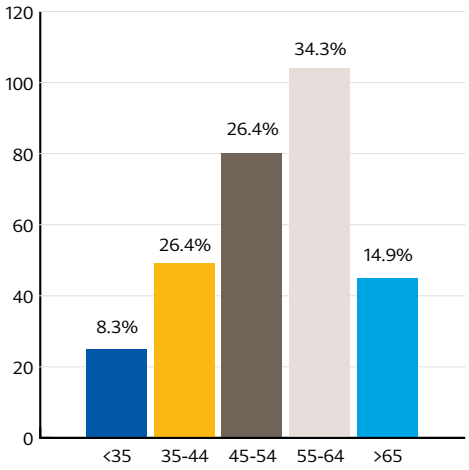
The Annual General Meeting of Centenary Thurles Co-Operative Society Ltd. will be held on Monday 22nd June 2026 at Templemore Road, Thurles, at 8.00 p.m.

Notice has issued and all Shareholders are most welcome.

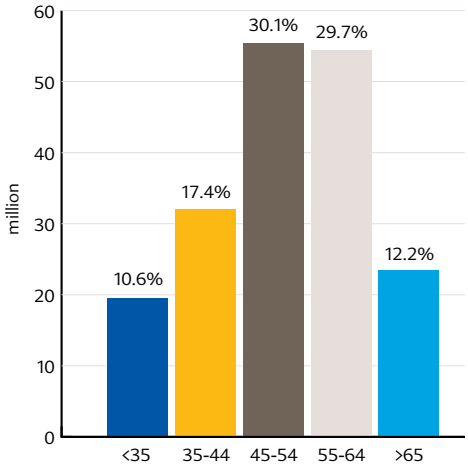
Milk Supplier Survey 2025

Towards the end of 2025 and into 2026, Centenary Thurles carried out a survey of all milk suppliers. We would like to thank all suppliers for participating in the survey which has enabled us to get a representative view of some key aspects on our dairy farms. There are many interesting facts emanating from the survey responses and you can browse the results yourself. We would see as a positive the responses to Questions 8 and 10, where 85% expect dairy farming to continue on their farms for the next 5 years and from those farms, there would be a significant increase in supply. Retaining the Nitrates Derogation in its current form is key — 70% of our milk supply is from suppliers availing of the derogation. All stakeholders are encouraged to do their utmost over the coming two years to secure its future for the benefit of our industry.

Q1a. Age bracket of main farmer (303 suppliers)



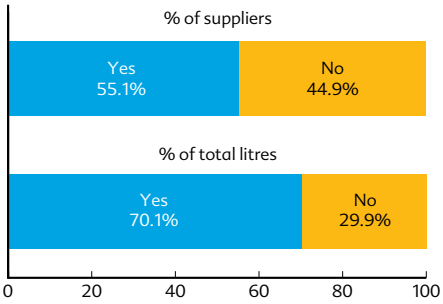
Q1b. Total milk volume by age bracket



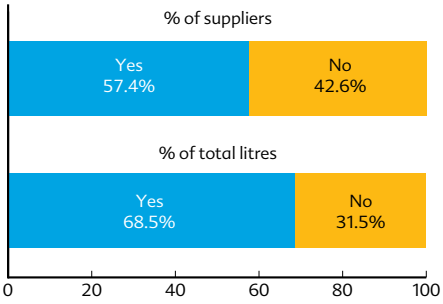
Q2. Number of cows milked in 2025

Average cows per supplier	109
Average litres per cow	5,573
Average litres per supplier	609,385
Total collection litres	184,643,794

Q3. Are you availing of derogation?



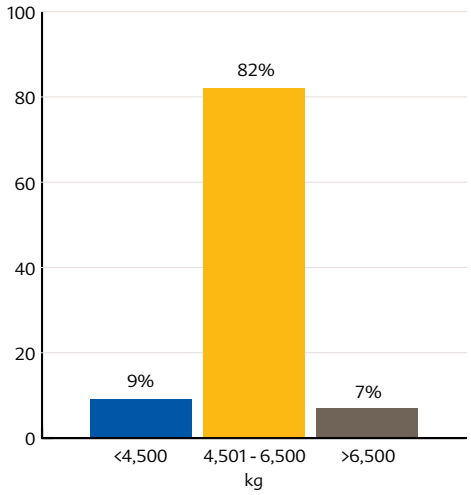
Q4. Do you Milk Record regularly?



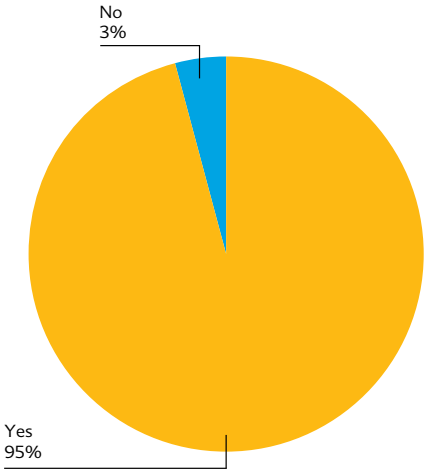
Q5. If you do not Milk Record, would you Milk Record regularly if the cost was subsidised by say 25%?

Option	Number	% of suppliers	% of total litres
Yes	49	38%	12.9%
No	51	39.5%	12.4%
Unsure	29	22.5%	6.6%
Total	129	100%	31.9%

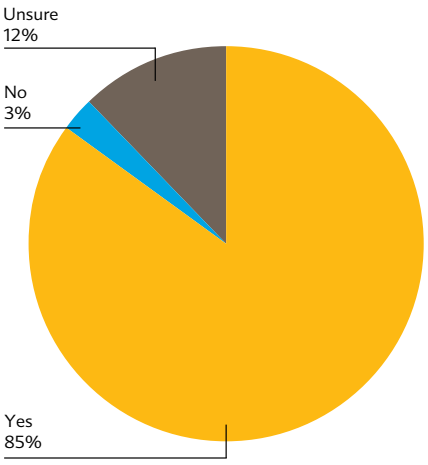
Q6. Which Nitrates Banding Category are you currently in?



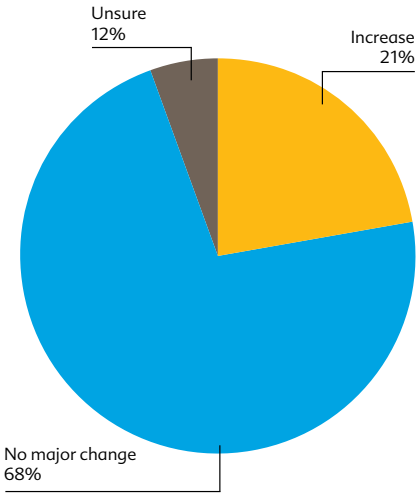
Q7. Are you aware of your current allowances for spreading chemical fertilisers?



Q8. Do you expect Dairy farming to continue on your farm for the next 5 years?



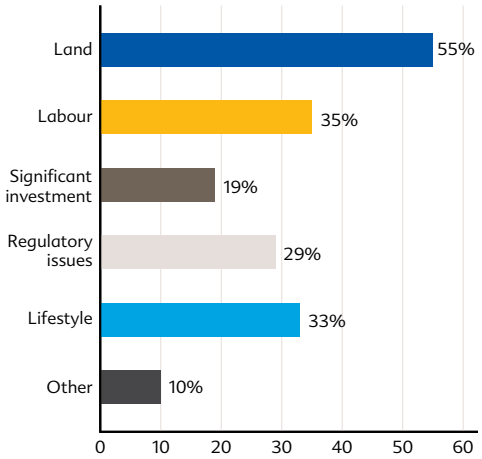
Q9. If you have answered Yes to Question 8 and Derogation is retained in its current format, what would be your plan in relation to dairy herd size over the next 5 years?



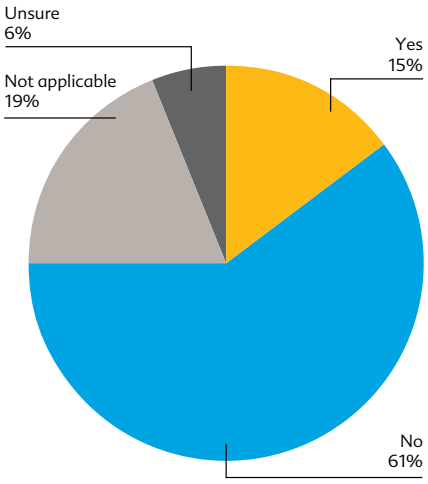
Q10. If in response to Question 9, you plan to increase or decrease your herd size over the next 5 years, by what percentage approximately?

Option	Number	Avg. volume of change	Total litres
Increase	64	22%	8,143,753.6
Decrease	14	16%	2,463,874.9
Total	78	Net increase in litres	5,679,878.8

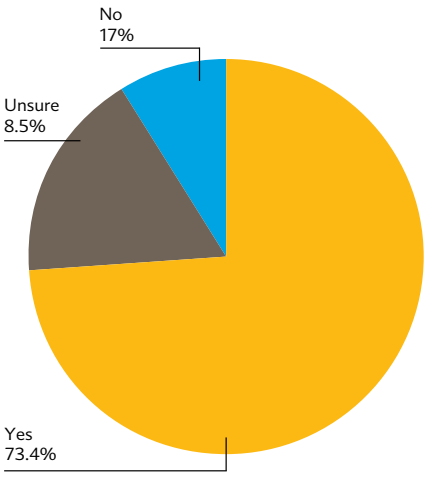
Q11. If you have answered Yes to Question 8, which of the following factors would limit growth in your milk supply over the next five years?



Q12. If you have answered Yes to Question 8, would you consider exiting or reducing other farm enterprises to grow dairy herd size?



Q13. If you have answered Yes to Question 8, on a practical basis, have you sufficient slurry storage for the next 5 years?



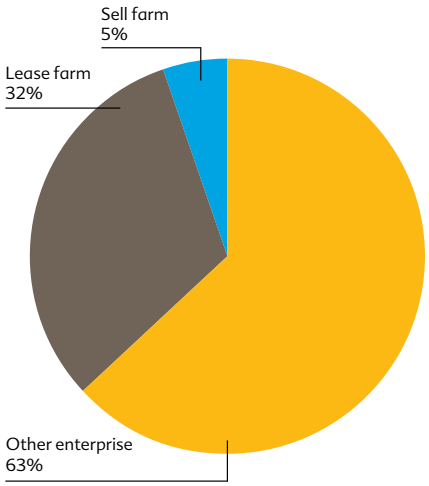
Q14. If "No" to Q13, what percentage increase in slurry storage do you estimate you require by 2030?

+24.6%

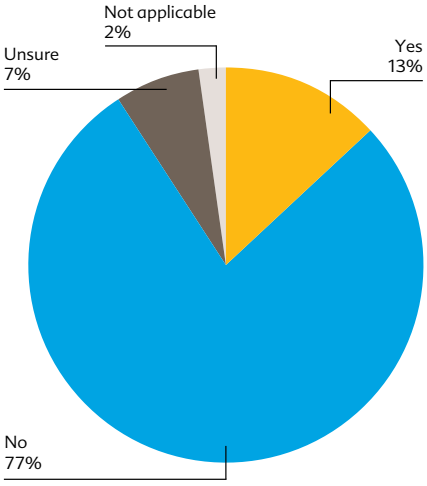
increase required by 2030

(n = 53 respondents)

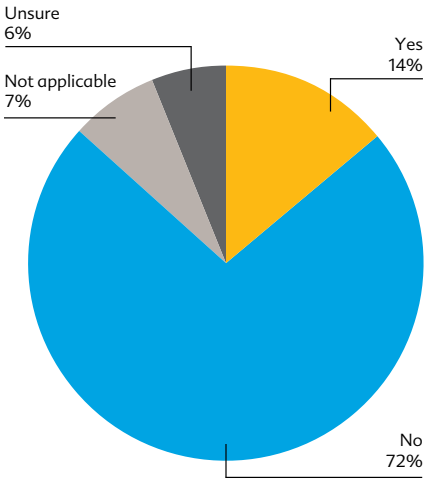
Q15. If you have answered NO or Unsure to Question 8, what future use might you make of the majority of your farm? (n=19)



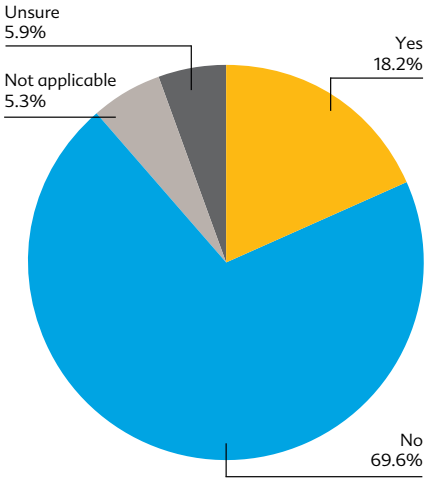
Q16. To remain in Dairying, would you consider entering a Farm Partnership with non-Family Member in the next 5 years?



Q17. To remain in Dairying and you are currently not robot milking, would you consider robot milking?



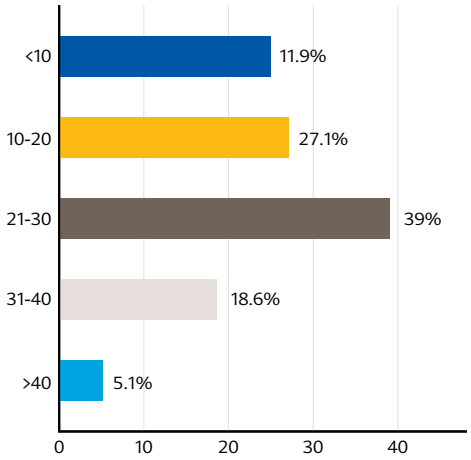
Q18. To remain in Dairying and you are currently not once-a-day milking, would you consider once-a-day milking?



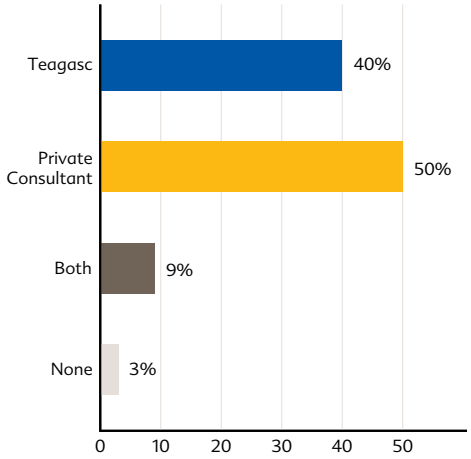
Q19. Have you identified a possible successor willing to remain in Dairying?

Option	% of total suppliers	% of total litres	Total litres
Yes	118	38.9%	75,738,892
No	113	37.3%	64,268,402
Unsure	65	21.5%	36,552,876

Q20. If you have answered yes to Question 19, which age bracket would that possible successor fit into now?



Q21. Who do you use for professional advice in relation to your farm activities?



Branch Manager Retirement

Friday 29th May last, saw the retirement of Michael Ryan from our Roscrea Branch after more than 35 years' service. This Branch was initially established as Roscrea Farm Store, a joint venture between Centenary and Avonmore, on a new greenfield site at Parkmore. Michael joined the business shortly after its establishment and soon after was appointed Branch Manager. In 2002, Centenary gained sole ownership of the business. Under our ownership, approval was given for a significant investment, and we proceeded to build a new shop and garden centre, which opened in 2005. Having been established initially without a customer base, the early years were difficult. Michael and his staff developed strong loyalty particularly through excellent customer service. He knew the importance of establishing a rapport with our customers, particularly our agri customers and developing relationships with them. Michael is wished well on his retirement and hopefully will enjoy many years of health and happiness.

Succeeding Michael as Branch Manager is Sean Grimes who joined the business in 2005 at the time of the establishment of the new shop. Sean has extensive experience particularly in the Home and Garden aspect of our business. Mark Fogarty has been appointed to oversee the development of the Agri side. The transition therefore should be seamless as Sean and his colleagues are committed to continue to grow and develop our business in Roscrea.

Pictured; Michael Ryan

Committee Retirements 2026

At our upcoming Annual General Meeting, the following Members of the Committee of Management will retire:

— Pat Kennedy, College Hill, Templemore
— Tom Shanahan, Kingstown, Cashel
— Thomas Maher, Frankfort, Dunkerrin

Pat joined the Committee in 2002 and was elected in 2021 as Vice-Chairman, a position he has held for the last 5 years. Tom Shanahan retires after serving 5 years, with Thomas Maher retiring after 8 years' service.

Joining the Committee of Management following the AGM are Jim Hoolan from Clashagad, Dunkerrin representing the Montore Electoral Area and Padraig Kennedy of College Hill, Templemore representing the Killea Electoral Area. The vacant Cashel will be filled in due course.

Financial Highlights 2025

Centenary Thurles has presented a robust set of Financial Statements for 2025. Some of the key figures:

Profit & Loss Account

— Turnover **€149.89m**
— Operating Profit **€2.41m**
— Other Operating Income **€1.83m**
— Fair Value Movements - Investments **€6.98m**
— Taxation **(€2.83m)**
— Retained Profit for 2025 **€8.39m**

Balance Sheet

— Tangible Assets **€10.88m**
— Investments **€40.29m**
— Net Current Assets **€32.93m**
— Deferred Tax Liability **(€5.03m)**
— Members' Funds **€79.07m**

Special General Meeting

Wednesday 20th May was a significant day in the history of Centenary Thurles Co-Op. Our eligible shareholders voted by a significant majority (71.4%) to adopt a new Rule Book for the Society.

The background to the new Rule Book lies in our desire to enhance compliance with good Corporate Governance. ICOS had developed a Code of Corporate Governance, which Centenary Thurles was seeking to adopt. The existing size of the Committee of Management was outside the Code.

The new Rule Book will take effect on registration by the Registrar of Friendly Societies. The existing 44 Members of the Committee of Management will transition to a Steering Committee. The existing powers of the Committee of Management (with some exceptions) will transfer to a new Board of Directors, elected by the Steering Committee. Shareholders will continue to elect the Steering Committee Members from their historical Electoral Groups.

A maximum of 20 Steering Committee Members will be elected to the Board of Directors in 2026 reducing to a maximum of 16 by 2030. There will be 11 members elected pro-rata from the 44 Steering Committee Members, by geographical area. Electoral Groups with 2 members currently elected to the Committee of Management have been grouped into Electoral Districts, solely for the purpose of election to the Board of Directors. Shareholders in these Electoral Groups will retain their right to elect 2 members to the Steering Committee. Pro-rata allocations are as follows:

Ballyduag/Loughmore	1
Cashel	1
Castleiney/Templetuohy	1
Central	2
Drom/Killea	1
Littleton	1
Loran	1
Montore	1
Thurles	2

Additional to those 11 seats on the Board, 1 seat will be reserved for our Tirlán Board Member; 1 seat for a Female Member; 1 seat will be filled from the 44 without regard to Electoral District; and 1 further seat will be filled in this same manner or alternatively reserved for an Independent Non-Executive Director, should the Board so decide. An additional seat if required will be allocated to the Thurles Electoral District, to bring overall representation to a minimum of 3. During the transition period to 2030, 4 additional seats will be filled from amongst the 44, excluding the Thurles Electoral District.

These are important changes and no doubt will take a little time for us to adjust to, but over the coming years the benefits of adopting the ICOS Code of Corporate Governance should become self-apparent.

Bonus Share Recommendation

The Committee of Management has proposed a significant Bonus Share allocation at the upcoming AGM. This, if approved, will provide significant reward to those shareholders who traded with the Society's businesses during 2025. The allocation has arisen as a result of the strong financial results for 2025.

The recommendation on Bonus Shares will be in two parts:

(a) Based on Shareholding	**Shares**
1 Bonus Share per 100 held at 31st May 2026	199,500

(b) Based on Trading	**Shares**
Allocation in respect of Milk Supply	63,500
Allocation in respect of Grain Supply	23,000
Allocation in respect of Store Purchases	491,000

The above allocations are approximate but if approved at the AGM would result in the transfer to Shareholders from the Reserves of the Society of approximately €777,000.

Based on indications year to date 2026, the Society continues to perform strongly. There is a strong likelihood therefore of a further significant allocation of Bonus Shares at next year's AGM based on 2026 trading. It is not too late therefore to participate based on this year's trading.

Managing Milk Production in Mid Lactation by Animal Nutritionist, Howard Stanley

Mid lactation is considered to be 100–200 days in milk. Cows are past peak, should hold body condition, and you want steady litres with strong fat and protein.

The main goals

— Keep milk flowing and protect fat% and protein%

— Hold body condition score (BCS) around 2.75—3.0.

— Avoid problems that quietly steal milk: mastitis, lameness, rumen upsets.

— Keep cows cycling and getting in calf on time and have a successful breeding season.

Feeding: steady energy = steady milk

— Keep intakes steady. Big day to day changes knock milk and solids.

— Don't let fibre get too low. Low fibre = loose dung and butterfat drops.

Simple rules of thumb: Keep grass quality as good as you can

— Graze good covers: about 1,300—1,600 kg DM/ha; leave a clean residual (4.0—4.5 cm).

— Typical summer round length: 18—21 days (speed up or slow down with growth).

— If grass is short or stemmy, add good silage. Avoid sudden ration changes.

Concentrates (feed to need, not habit):

2—4 kg/cow/day often holds solids when grass is very leafy or weather is poor.

Choose by what's missing in the diet, if you:

— Need more energy: Feed more nuts with high quality ingredients.

— Butterfat slipping or dung loose with bubbles? Then you need to Add digestible fibre or feed a nut with yeast ? Buffer.

Change rates slowly: no more than 0.5—1.0 kg up or down per day.

Minerals, vitamins, water:

— Magnesium and sodium matter on lush grass.

— Trace minerals (iodine, selenium, copper, cobalt, zinc) at recommended levels—test if unsure.

— Plenty of clean water. Milking cows can drink between 70 and 120 litres on warm days.

Rumen health and milk solids

— Watch for SARA (sub acute rumen acidosis): loose dung, less cudding, sore feet, fat:protein ratio under ~1.1.

— Keep enough effective fibre (some longer forage) on offer to cows.

Body condition

— Target BCS 2.75—3.0. Mid lactation is for holding steady—not losing or piling on weight.

— Weigh/score monthly. If more than 1 in 6 cows is under 2.5, energy or health needs a review.

— If you can, group thinner cows and feed them some more balanced energy rich feeds.

Health: small issues cost big milk

Mastitis and SCC:

— Same prep every milking, good unit alignment, post dip every time.

— Replace liners at 2,000 milkings; service the plant on schedule.

— Track SCC per cow, treat promptly where necessary and keep high SCC cow's milk separate.

Lameness:

— Footbath regularly.

— Locomotive score cows: this method is used to identify lameness at an early stage.

— Trim problem cows early. Fix rough concrete and tight turns on lanes and yards.

Flies and parasites:

— Mid season pressure cuts grazing time. Use targeted worming with vet advice and keep fly control going.

— We have made a substantial investment in Faecal Egg Testing equipment at Ballyduff and encourage all members to test regularly for parasite burden.

Heat:

— Shade, air-flow and sufficient trough space are all very important. Cows should be given time to move in warm weather and never hurried.

Fertility and milk

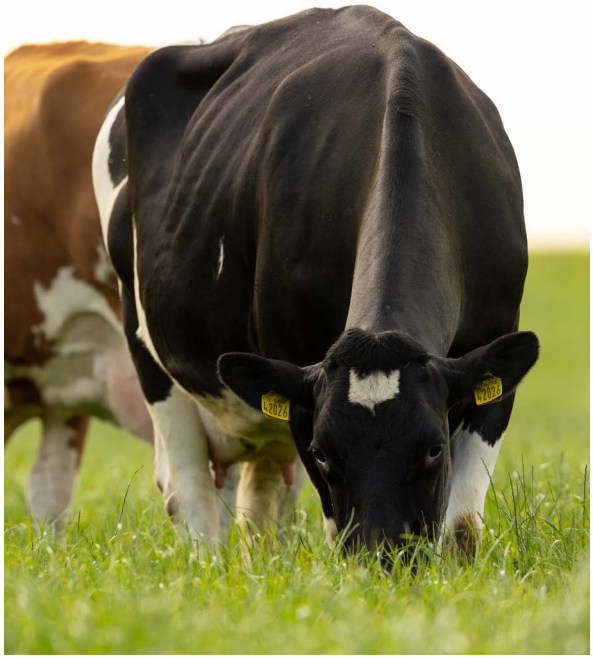
— Low or dropping milk protein highlights that cows are not getting enough energy in their diet. A butterfat to protein ratio of 1.4 or greater indicates that your herd is in negative energy balance leading to body condition loss.

— By mid lactation cows should be cycling. Use tail paint or activity collars and AI on time.

— Keep an eye on 3 weekly submission and conception rates. If they slip, check energy, minerals, and lameness.

Use your milk results to tell the story:

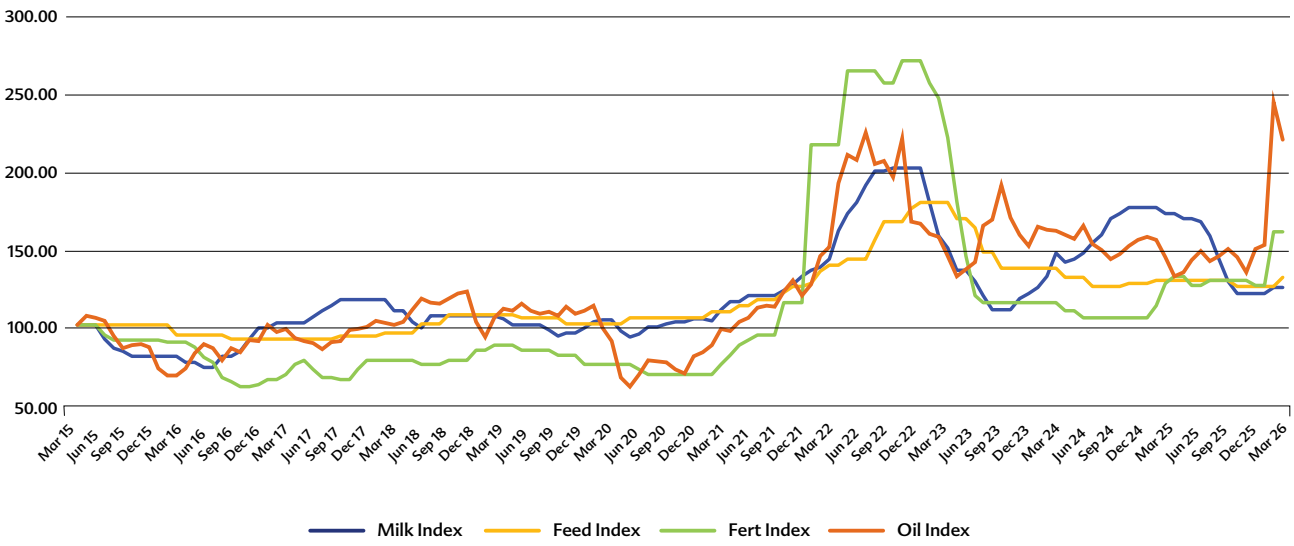
— Monitor milk urea to avoid over feeding of protein which can lead to embryonic loss if not corrected.



Price Volatility

Sporadically, we provide through our newsletter an update on some key inflation data pertinent to our milk suppliers. The above chart covers the period from March 2015 (end of quota era) up to and including April 2026. The spikes over the years are self-evident with fertiliser and oil particularly expensive at this time, as a result of the war on Iran. The oil price in particular will feed into many other costs on-farm. Budgeting can be difficult in the short term and any increase in milk price will be most welcome. The key message would appear to be when milk price is high relative to costs, as it was for the period from July 2024 to August 2025, there may be an opportunity for suppliers to catch up with any arrears, pay down some short-term debt and/or provide for times when milk price will inevitably fall. Over the period monitored above, the average monthly growth in milk price amounted to 19%, with average growth of 15% in feed prices and 10% in fertiliser. The average monthly growth in oil prices at 20%, exceeded the milk price growth. Whilst volatility remain a significant factor from month to month, if past performance is any guide, the long-term outlook remains positive. So much of that volatility arises from factors outside the reasonable control of suppliers, Co-Ops or indeed many nations.

Price Movements - Base March 2015 Index 100



Milk Quality Awards

Congratulations to the Campion family from Drom on winning the Centenary Thurles Co-op Milk Quality Awards at a ceremony at The Horse and Jockey Hotel on Tuesday 2nd June. The award is fitting recognition of the Campion family's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of milk quality, animal care and farm management throughout the year.

We are incredibly proud to see the Campion family go forward to represent Centenary Thurles Co-op at this year's NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards. We would also like to acknowledge our fellow finalists, whose high standards and commitment to excellence continue to showcase the very best of dairy farming within Centenary Thurles Co-op.

Congratulations once again to the Campion family on this outstanding achievement. We wish them continued success for the future.

Pictured L-R; Stuart Childs (Teagasc), Paddy Campion, Ann Dwan, Ann Campion, Micheal Campion & Aileen Ryan.

Competition Winner

Congratulations to Amanda O' Mahony the winner of our recent Competition! Amanda has won Afternoon Tea for four at The Horse & Jockey Hotel. Thanks to all who entered the competition. It is always a pleasure to support and celebrate our local community through competitions like this. Amanda, we hope you enjoy this special treat!

Pictured L-R; Geraldine Ryan (Centenary Home & Garden Littleton) Isabel O'Dwyer & Amanda O' Mahony.

Better Farming for Water — Clonmore Stream Farmyard Event

There was a great turnout at the Better Farming for Water Quality — Clonmore Stream Farmyard Event held on the 7th of May on the farm of Philip and Paddy Joyce.

The event provided farmers and attendees with an opportunity to discuss practical, on-farm measures that can help improve and protect local water quality, while also supporting sustainable farming practices for future generations.

A sincere thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to the informative and constructive discussions throughout the morning. The strong level of engagement reflected the continued commitment within the local farming community to responsible land stewardship and environmental sustainability.

Special thanks to Philip and Paddy Joyce for hosting the event and sharing their experience and insights with all present.

Staff Training

Yard Operations

Our Yard Operations training focused on the importance of preventing shrink, damage, and waste to protect profitability. The session explored the true cost of losses, identified key risk areas, and outlined practical steps that can be taken collectively to improve stock accuracy, safety, and security. By working together and staying mindful of best practices, we can help minimise losses and support overall business performance.

Pictured, back row (L to R); JP Costello, Daniel Gallahue. **Pictured, front row (L to R);** David Morris, Thomas Morrissey

AI Workshop

A number of staff recently attended a Digital Transformation and AI workshop, led by experts from TUS Limerick and AI Ireland, which provided valuable insights into how SME businesses can leverage digital tools and emerging technologies. The session highlighted supports available through European Digital Innovation Hubs, alongside practical demonstrations of how AI can be applied in everyday business operations. The workshop had a strong focus on practical, real-world applications tailored to SME needs.

H&S Training

As part of our ongoing commitment to safety, staff regularly attend training in key operational areas, including forklift operation, loader use, and refresher programmes for both. These sessions ensure employees maintain the necessary skills, awareness, and compliance standards to carry out their roles safely and effectively, supporting a strong culture of safety and wellbeing across the business.

Stock Control

Our recent Stock Control training highlighted the critical role stock management plays in driving profitability. The session focused on understanding the true cost of holding stock, reducing slow-moving items, and minimising waste, damage, and shrinkage. Employees were encouraged to take a proactive approach, with practical tools and techniques shared to improve forecasting, maintain optimal stock levels, and ultimately support stronger business performance.

Pictured, back row (L to R); JP Costello, Daniel Gallahue, Adam Leahy, Jack Airton. **Pictured, front row (L to R);** Stephen Lysaght, Enda Ryan, Derek Patterson, Dominique Grimaut

Summer life at Cabragh Wetlands

By Kevin Collins, Anne Llyod & Louise Garcia

As the days grow longer and the warmth of summer begins to settle across the landscape, Cabragh Wetlands bursts into life with colour, sound and movement. From the songs of breeding birds hidden among the reeds to the emergence of wildflowers, butterflies and dragonflies, the wetlands become a thriving sanctuary for biodiversity. Each habitat across Cabragh supports its own unique community of life, creating a piece of art from the nature that changes throughout the season. Summer is one of the most vibrant times of year, offering a glimpse into the remarkable variety of birds, plants and insects that inhabit the Wetlands.

Birds of Cabragh Wetlands

Cabragh Wetlands consists of a variety of habitats which are extremely rich in terms of the diversity and number of animal species they support. The wetlands support different bird species at different times of the year. During the summer months, Sedge Warblers, Reed Buntings and Water Rails breed in the reed beds. Snipe nest in the wet grassland. Lapwings may nest on the shorter grass. Willow Warblers and Blackcaps make their home in the Willows along the Killough Stream. A pair of Barn Owls regularly breed in a nest-box on the site, while House Martins nest on the highest point of the Cabragh Wetlands centre.

Proudly Supporting

Cabragh Wetlands | Tipperary Centre for Environmental Learning

Flora of Cabragh Wetlands

Cabragh Wetlands has many different habitats. Each habitat has its own group of plants, each one demanding different a condition to grow. The following plant species can be found at Cabragh Wetlands.

Plant name	Habitat	Season
Marsh marigold	Wet/Mosaic grassland	Spring
Yellow rattle	Grassland	Summer
Water forget-me-not	Reedbed	Summer
Great spearwort	Reedbed	Summer
Great willowherb	Wet meadows	Summer
Brookweed	Transition mire	Summer
Knapweed	Grassland	Autumn

Insects of Cabragh Wetlands

Summer sees an explosion of insect diversity at Cabragh Wetlands. Damselflies and dragonflies spend the first part of their lives underwater in the ponds and stream but now emerge as glittering winged adults. Darkness cloaks the beauty of our largest night-flying moths but we can look for their extraordinary caterpillars and see moths that fly by day. The Brimstone and Orange-tip butterflies of early summer are succeeded by Small Tortoiseshells, Red Admirals, Peacocks and others. Jewel-like metallic reed beetles, leaf beetles and tortoise beetles graze in the low vegetation along with the rare 13-spot ladybird. Blue, green and bronze shieldbugs hunt their prey while a variety of hoverflies, wasps and bees sip nectar from flowers. The rare Large Carder Bee thrives at Cabragh, as does the Red-tailed Bumblebee. Meanwhile, under the surface of the pond, giant water beetles dive and swim.

DAIRY WOMEN
IRELAND

North Munster Region
presents:

SUMMER FAMILY EVENT

GOOD FARMING.
GOOD WATER.
GOOD FUTURE.

A family-friendly morning exploring water quality, biodiversity and practical actions for better farming and a brighter future.

THURSDAY
13 AUGUST
2026

11AM - 1PM

CABRAGH WETLANDS
THURLES, CO. TIPPERARY

JOIN US FOR:

PRACTICAL ACTIONS FOR WATER QUALITY
Simple, practical steps for protecting water on farms.

MACROINVERTEBRATES & BIODIVERSITY
Explore aquatic life and learn why biodiversity matters for water quality.

COSMIC WALK
Join Michael Long for a guided walk, exploring nature, wetlands and our local environment.

CONNECTION & REFRESHMENTS
Tea, coffee and refreshments provided.

Speakers include:

CLAIRE MOONEY
TEAGASC

MICHAEL LONG
CABRAGH WETLANDS

Centenary Thurles
Co-operative Society Ltd

Cabragh Wetlands

DAIRY WOMEN
IRELAND

Good Farming. Good Water. Good Future.

By Katie Gleeson

@katieinthecountry
Dairy farmer and DWI Steering Committee Member

If you've ever been to a Dairy Women Ireland North Munster event, you'll know they tend to be fairly real-life affairs. There might be a baby asleep in a buggy, somebody arriving slightly late because cows had other plans, and plenty of chats happening over tea rather than behind microphones.

For the past few years, we've made a conscious effort to create a summer event that feels genuinely family-friendly not just for dairy women, but for partners, children, grandparents and hopefully inspire the next generation of young farmers too. This year, we're delighted to bring our Summer Family Event to Cabragh Wetlands on Thursday 13th August, with the support of Centenary Thurles Co-operative.

Our theme this year is "Good Farming. Good Water. Good Future."

Many local farmers will already be familiar with conversations around water quality through the Suir catchment work, ASSAP engagement and farm walks happening across the region. But this morning isn't about regulations or sitting through presentations. Instead, it's about getting curious and exploring water quality in a practical, interactive and family-friendly way.

We'll be joined by Claire Mooney from Teagasc, looking at practical actions farmers can take around the yard to help protect water quality, while Michael Long from Cabragh Wetlands will guide us through an interactive exploration of wetlands, biodiversity, macroinvertebrates and Cabragh's fascinating Cosmic Walk. And having attended many events at Cabragh myself, there's probably no better place for the conversation.

Many of us know Cabragh Wetlands is there, but not everybody fully appreciates what a gem we have on our doorstep. Through its work in conservation, recreation and environmental education, it has become a place where schools, families and communities can connect with nature in a really hands-on way. For years, Centenary Thurles Co-operative and Cabragh Wetlands have shared a strong local connection and partnership, supporting a place that brings together education, community, nature and local people. That's a big part of why hosting this year's Dairy Women Ireland family event in this location feels so fitting.

So, if you're a woman involved in the dairy sector and you're curious to come along and learn more, we'd love to welcome you. Bring the kids (little or not so little!) and grab a couple of hours away from the yard with good company, fresh air and a cup of tea.

Boots, buggies, babies and questions all very welcome.

Find out more at **dairywomenireland.ie**
Follow us on socials **@dairywomenireland**
to keep up to date with our latest news.

Managing your grazing to reduce your worm burden

By Eilish Gill B. Agri. Sci
SPARC Project Officer, Animal Health Ireland

Pre-grazing Planning

Let's have a look at your grazing plans through a parasitic management lens. By introducing other measures that rely less on wormers, we can help reduce the risk of anthelmintic resistance and possibly reduce the impact of worms/fluke on your herd. These usually include some form of grazing or pasture management aimed at reducing the exposure of young stock to high worm burdens. It's impossible to be completely worm/fluke free due to the nature of our grazing systems and weather, however we can manage these parasites better.

Don't think of it as something that will impact your grass production, think of it as a tool for your grass to increase animal health, productivity and performance.

Who is at highest risk of parasite disease?

All Autumn born and Spring born Calves

These are your first season grazers; at this stage they have no immunity to worms. It's important that they gradually build immunity over the grazing season. Unfortunately, there is no way to measure this immunity in calves. We could go out of our way to keep them away from any worms, such as keeping them housed — however they won't develop any immunity and may wind up suffering as second season grazers if hit with a heavy worm outbreak.

Spring born suckler calves have little grass in their diet until later in the season, so their risk of disease is much lower until around weaning.

Yearlings

These animals are not yet fully immune to parasites; they can still be at risk of poor performance when infected. By laying the groundwork for good immunity in the first season, they will cope better the older they get.

Managing pasture: What are "low" and "high" risk pastures?

Low-Risk/ Cleaner Pasture — these should have low larvae activity

- New or reseeded pastures
- Paddocks with mixed species such as clover, kale or chicory
- Pastures that have been grazed by sheep most recently or co-grazed with sheep/cattle/horses
- A pasture where the last occupants were older cattle
- Silage aftergrass later in the season

For example, you might be able to put young calves mid-way through the grazing season onto silage aftergrass. This resets the number of larvae available on the pastures to re-infect the calves, reducing the risk of disease.

High-Risk/ Dirty Pasture — these are likely to have high larvae activity

- Pastures grazed only by young first season cattle last year or that they were the last occupants
- The Calf Paddock. Where do you turn out your calves for the first time? Likely it's the same paddock year on year.

It's not feasible to keep away from high-risk paddocks completely but it is useful to be aware of them. Try not to let your young calves into these high-risk paddocks too early in the season or during a high-risk time i.e. after a spell of rain after a drought. You can rather use them for yearlings or adults who have better immunity.

For your calf paddocks, is it possible to have two fields to use as calf paddocks and rotate them each year? This will limit the exposure cycle, where this year's crop of calves will be infected by the eggs and larvae that have survived over from last year.

What else can you do?

It's unlikely you will have all of the low risk/cleaner pasture options on your farm. You can still use this information to your advantage by applying other measures to monitor your animals and make sure they are not losing performance.

Faecal Egg Counts (FECs)

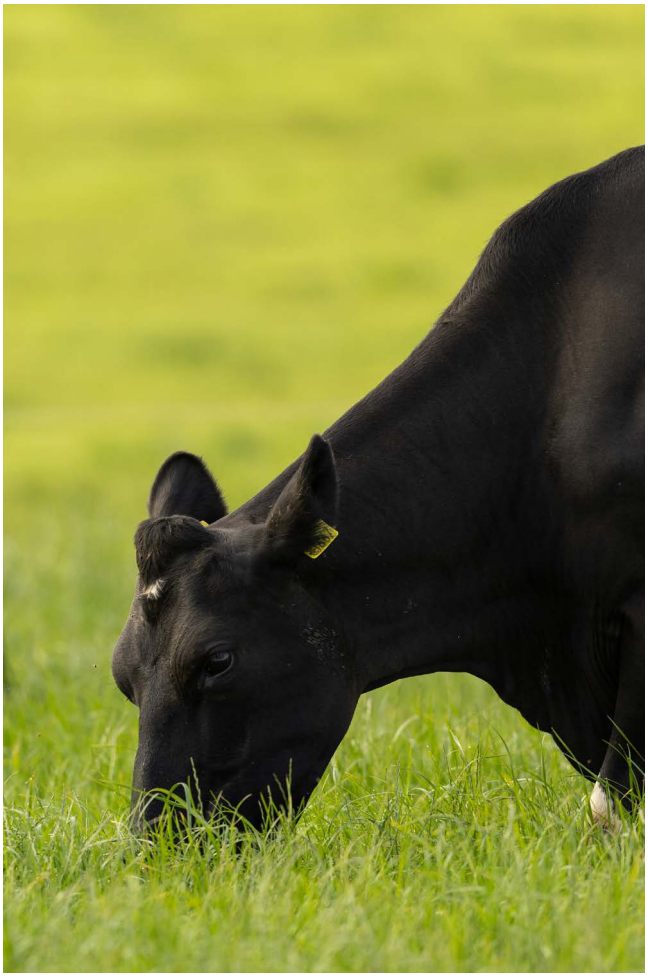
Monthly group sampling is a good way to monitor burden on pastures. It's a useful factor for treatment decisions. Remember, taking only one FEC shows a snapshot of that day, the parasite situation can change quickly so try for every 4 weeks to give you a better picture of changes over time.

Consistent Weighing

By utilising the weighing scales, you can track animal performance. Parasite burden can be an underlying issue to weight loss. Consider weighing at three points of the season such as turn-out, mid-season, and housing.

Future Grass Decisions

Remember if you are considering reseeding or planting multi species swards — they are beneficial for reducing larvae on pastures.



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Summer Calf Scour

Dr Michelle McGrath,
AHI CalfCare Programme Manager

Hopefully for you the busy times of the Spring and breeding season are nearing an end, and the long summer days are in sight.

However, it is during this time that another challenge arises. We call it summer scour syndrome, and it deserves a lot more attention than it gets. While it may be quieter in its arrival than the stress of Spring or the breeding season, it catches many of even the best farmers off guard every single year, and it costs the Irish cattle sector millions before it's finished.

Every summer, without fail, I hear some version of the same story.

A farmer has calves going backwards at grass. They're scouring, losing condition fast, not responding to treatment. They have done the obvious things, and nothing is working.

More often than not what they're dealing with, is summer scour syndrome, and the reason it's catching them off guard is that it doesn't behave like the diseases most farmers know well.

Understanding what it is, and crucially what it isn't, is the starting point for dealing with it.

What we're actually talking about

Summer scour syndrome is characterised by scour (where common causes have been ruled out), rapid weight loss, lethargy, weakness and lack of rumination. In severe cases, calves can develop ulceration of the mouth, oesophagus or muzzle.

The condition progresses, and it can be fatal. Critically, the calves affected are usually unresponsive to conventional treatments. The one thing that consistently works is removing them from grass until they recover.

That last point is telling, because it points directly to the cause. The one common factor in every confirmed case of summer scour syndrome is a grazing diet.

It typically affects calves within a month of turnout to grass, or after a dry summer following a period of good grass growth and up to 12 months of age. Not all calves in a group will be affected, and severity varies from farm to farm and year to year, which is part of what makes it difficult to spot the pattern.

It is worth being clear about what the science currently says: an infectious cause has not been identified. This is a nutritional and rumen development issue, not an infection. And that matters enormously for how you approach it.

The grass is part of the problem

Summer sour syndrome is more common where calves are grazing rich or lush pastures, typically those with crude protein above 20% and low fibre content, less than 40% per kilogram of dry matter.

Calves are choosy pickers and selective grazers. They preferentially consume top, leafier parts of the grass, the parts highest in nitrates and non-protein nitrogen.

With an immature rumen, the young calf cannot handle large quantities of these compounds. The suspected mechanism is an excessive build-up of ammonia in the rumen, along with an unstable pH that disrupts the rumen microbe population. The young calf's rumen simply isn't ready for what it's being asked to digest. Think of it like calves wanting to dine out at the Michelin star restaurants all the time!

Reseeded paddocks, recently slurry-spread land, and any pasture with very leafy covers are the highest risk environments. If your farm has a history of summer scour, those paddocks should be kept for older stock in the first months after turnout.

Don't delay, call the vet today

This is where farmers and vets sometimes lose time, and time matters with this condition.

Several other diseases can look similar: coccidiosis, high worm burden, mineral problems including molybdenum toxicity and copper issues, rumen acidosis, salmonellosis, and respiratory disease.

Your vet can distinguish between these, but doing so requires a proper diagnostic workup: clinical examination, faecal samples, grass trace element analysis, blood testing, and assessing the response to treatment and supplementation.

Only when these common causes are ruled out can a diagnosis of summer scour syndrome be made with confidence.

Molybdenum deserves a specific mention. High molybdenum itself, not just the associated copper deficiency, can cause scour in claves at grass. If you're farming in a high-molybdenum area, it's worth discussing the mineral risk of your calf pastures with your vet before problems develop, not after. It can take a long time to get grass analysis results back from the lab and as highlighted above, time is something we don't have a lot of.

Treatment isn't linear

There is no single cure. That needs to be said plainly. Treatment options will vary and should be discussed with your vet.

What is non-negotiable is this: if summer sour syndrome is suspected, affected calves must be removed from grass immediately. The earlier you act, the greater the chance of recovery and the less chance of longterm issues arising.

In most outbreaks, only 10 to 20% of the calf group will be affected, so you're not necessarily looking at a whole-herd intervention.

Housed calves should be given good quality forage, hay, silage or straw, along with good quality calf concentrate and ad-lib access to water. Electrolytes may be required if calves are dehydrated.

After four to six weeks, if they have recovered sufficiently, they can be returned to pasture, but to pastures that are not lush, and with access to extra fibre and concentrate alongside.

Affected animals will be immunosuppressed, so your vet should check for concurrent disease, respiratory problems in particular, which would need treatment in its own right.

Prevention is the difference

The AHI CalfCare guidance is very clear on this, and it reflects what advisors, vets and farmers have learned through hard experience: prevention of summer scour syndrome begins well before turnout.

Weaning is the critical first link in the chain. Gradual weaning matters enormously. Both concentrates and water should be introduced in the first week of life, weaning should begin up to four weeks before milk is removed entirely, and calves should be eating at least 1.5kg of concentrate consistently for three consecutive days before they are fully weaned.

Rushing weaning, or weaning too early, sends calves to grass with a rumen that is not ready for the job... and that Michelin star food will cause a problem.

The 2026 AHI CalfCare Blueprint, which has been developed using the best advice and science courtesy of the CalfCare Technical Working Group, recommends that for farms with a history of summer scour, calves should be kept indoors on forage and concentrate for at least a week after weaning before any turnout to grass.

That buffer period gives the rumen a better chance of being able to adapt and cope better when turned out.

When turnout does happen, the quality of the pasture matters as much as the timing. Calves should graze stemmy, fibrous, stronger swards rather than very lush leafy covers. Including an additional source of

fibre at grass and strip grazing, which forces calves to eat both the leaf and the stem rather than just cherry-picking the top growth, are worth considering on farms with history of the problem.

Avoid recently reseeded paddocks and land that has had slurry or nitrogen applied recently. Slower-growing, more mature pastures have less nitrogen and more fibre, which is what a young calf's rumen needs.

After turnout, keep some concentrate going. Removing milk and transitioning to grass simultaneously, while withdrawing concentrate, is asking for trouble.

Colostrum: still the foundation

Farmers might be bored of hearing about this, but colostrum is the key. It really is the difference between a healthy calf and playing Russian roulette with the next generation of your herd.

No discussion of calf health, including summer scour syndrome, can fully separate itself from colostrum, because the immune status of calf in its first grazing season is directly shaped by what happened in the first hours of its life.

The 1, 2, 3 rule: (cleanly harvested and correctly stored) colostrum from the first milking, fed within two hours of birth, at least three litres or 10% of bodyweight. A Brix refractometer reading of 22% or above confirms good quality colostrum. Antibody absorption by the gut peaks at birth and stops after 24 hours.

A calf that misses that window is a calf with a compromised start, and that compromise does not disappear when the calf goes to grass.

What to watch for and when to call your vet

The main risk periods for summer scour are during the first four to six weeks after turnout and during a dry summer, the risk increases again in August or September following a burst of grass growth. Calves should be monitored closely for signs of diarrhoea and weight loss Weighing calves regularly during the grazing season is the most reliable early warning system. A calf that is losing ground will show it on the scales before it looks visibly sick

Call your vet if a calf has a temperature above 39.5°C, is very weak or has sunken eyes, is not responding to care within 24 hours, or is refusing several feeds in one day.

These are the thresholds from CalfCare guidance, and they are there for good reason.

Early intervention changes outcomes. Waiting to see whether a calf comes right on its own, is a gamble that does not usually pay off.

The bottom line

Summer scour syndrome is a genuine threat to calf health and farm profitability on Irish dairy farms every season. It is also, in large part, a preventable one.

The levers are practical and available to every farmer: gradual weaning with proper concentrate intake before removal of milk, to ensure good rumen development, a fibre-based transition period before turnout, careful choice of pasture in the first weeks at grass, and close monitoring of calves in weeks that follow.

While research continues around this condition, to date the science tells us this is a nutritional condition, not an infectious one. The solution is not in a bottle or a syringe. It is in the management decisions made in the weeks around turnout.

Get those right, and summer scour syndrome, for most farms, most years, can be kept where it belongs: as something that happens to other people.

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Summer Gardening Special

Terriesa Torode

Hello everyone, here are a few jobs to be done this month.

June

Welcome to your summer newsletter on gardening. This is a time of the year that we feel lighter and happier and its no wonder with so much glory surrounding us, from hedgerows spilling with foliage and flowers, our gardens are a blaze with colour, the woodlands are fresh and vibrantly green. Fields are lush and the birds are in full swing of nesting. Colour everywhere folks!

Dead heading

This is done to encourage flowers to keep flowering. Some perennials flowered earlier and these can now be cut back and some of these may produce flowers later in the summer once again. Phlox, Penstemons and Delphiniums all enjoy this cutting back of their flowers. Annuals must have their flowers dead headed because otherwise the flower will think it has done its job and sets seed. Once this has started an annual is very hard to get to flower again so deadhead regular all flowers like Begonias, Dahlias, Sweet peas, Violas and Pansies.

Vegetables

Continue to harvest all salad vegetables and remember to always keep sowing a few seeds every couple of weeks. This way you will have a plentiful supply of these tasty vegetables all summer long. Plant out all Tomatoes, Aubergines, Courgettes, Sweet corn and Squashes, Marrows and French and Runner beans now there is no chance of frost in the garden. Feed these with a high potash fertiliser. Place supports before planting, so no roots are damaged and tie in the new shoots when they are growing onto the supports. Earth up main crop potatoes every two weeks and keep an eye out for blight if these weather conditions stay with us - warm rainy days. Earth up celery as it grows and start to sow your winter vegetables so the plants can grow over the summer months and be strong for the autumn planting. Plant out winter brassicas if already sown these. Protect all brassicas with netting, if you haven't already noticed this but pigeons enjoy a tasty cabbage head. The netting also prevents the cabbage butterfly from laying her eggs on your rich greens.

Fruit

Keep an eye for grey mould on your strawberries. There are no chemicals nowadays to help with this problem so pick every strawberry that you see has this disease. Do not place n the compost bin as this only spreads the disease. Any time you remove a diseased shoot from any fruit always burn or place in the rubbish, try to remove from the garden as it only spreads all diseases around the garden as many plants are closely related. Place pheromone traps up in the trees to prevent the coddling moth from being a nuisance and causing disease, one trap is enough for five trees. Gooseberries can be thinned out now and when the apples are growing remove some of these too but only after the natural June drop, and only the weak apples in a bunch, ideally one or two apples per bunch should be saved. If your blackcurrants are not looking great as in their leaves are all distorted and smaller, this is a disease called reversion, and the plants will have to be lifted and burnt. Do not plant in the exact same place as before, choose a new position as the disease could very well be in the soil.

Keep tying all shoots of Blackberries, Loganberries and Tay-berries. Prune excess growth from vines by pinching out shoots at a leaf beyond a cluster. Vines in this country will only produce three or four bunches per vine so all other growth is not needed. If you are growing strawberries and do not need any more plants then remove all runners, as its only taking energy from the mother plant. If you do need some new strawberry plants, then allow only four runners per plant of around five plants. This should ensure a fresh supply of runners and the rest of the plants can produce all the tasty fruit.

Houseplants

These will be growing well now, and these can also enjoy a time outside if you like. Always take a sheltered part of the garden, no strong sunlight and no strong winds as you are taking them out of a house where these do not exist. Inside fertilise every week all plants in the house. Orchids get fed when in flower so if they are not flowering leave until later in the year. Use saucers filled with gravel underneath large foliage plants filled with water and spray these twice a week. For large, leafed varieties clean their leaves to help them breath. Water cacti once a week and some plants may need twice a week. Always use rainwater for Azaleas, Cyclamen and some ferns. Pot up all plants needing this treatment so they do not suffer and check for pests as this is the time you will see them for instance- spider mite, aphids and scale insects.

Lawns

It is important to mention, if you did not fertilise your lawn in spring then find a summer fertilise and apply to the whole lawn. Edge your lawns every month to prevent grass growing into borders.

Biennials

These can be sown early June for flowering next year and some of our most favourite plants are these delightful flowering plants. Foxgloves, Sweet Williams and Wallflowers are just some examples and real cottage garden favourites. A biennial will grow leaves in its first year and the second-year flowers are produced in abundance so do not worry if you only see leaves this year.

Annuals

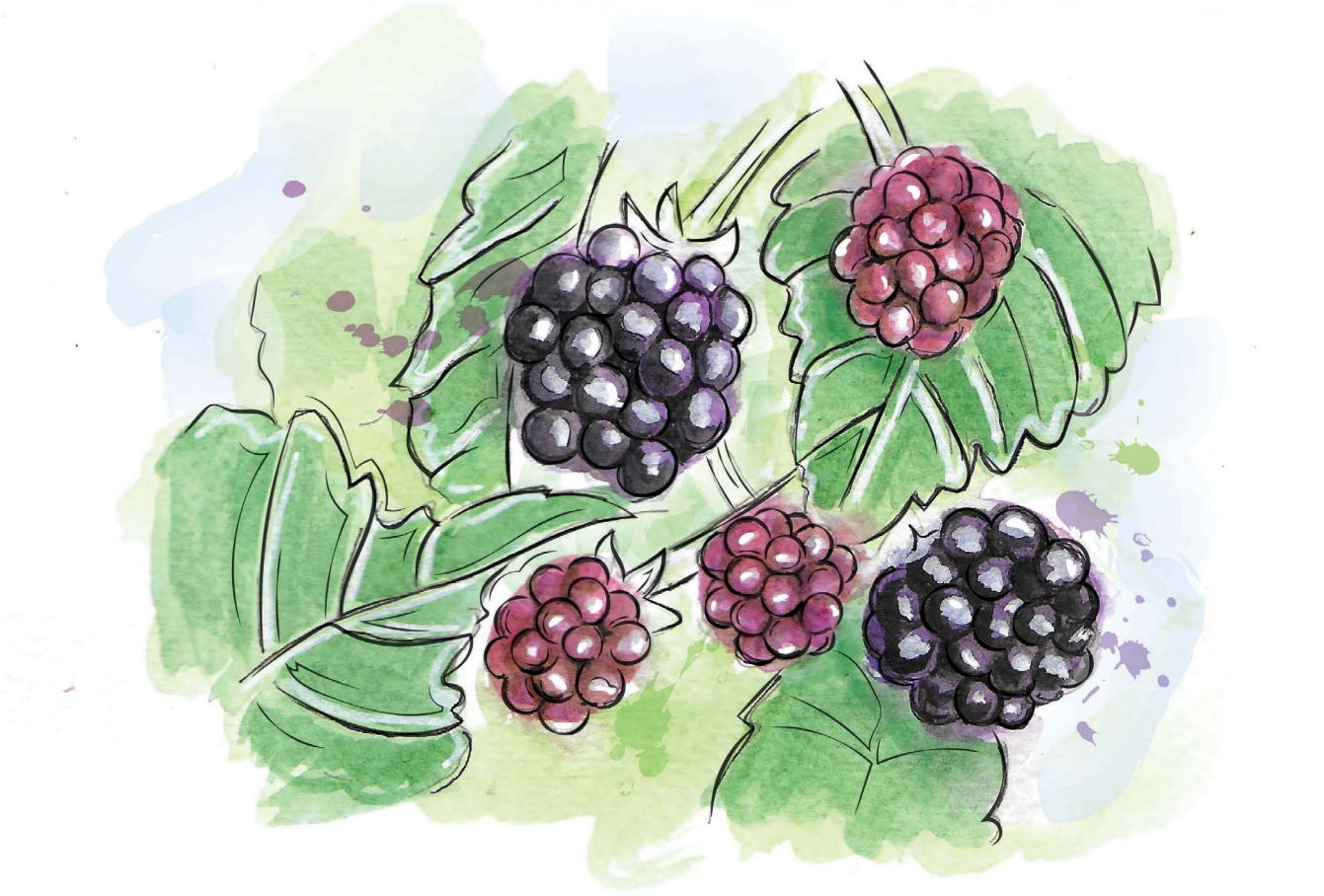
You have just about enough time to create a show of colour if you sow annuals now. Use gaps in the border and prepare the ground beforehand. Remove all weeds, gently fork over the area and rake until smooth and large clump free. Sow the annuals then water, weed out a few weeks later and maybe place a slug deterrent down. Grow your own cut flowers by using annuals to provide some very delicate or unusual flowers to go in your summer picked bunches. Obviously, we all think of sweet peas but there are so many more like Cosmos, Cornflowers, Snap dragons, Sunflowers, Scabiosa, Straw flowers, Bells of Ireland and Statice are just a few. I personally use these useful plants because I can achieve so much with only the price of a packet of seeds!

Cuttings or plants for free

Now and for the next couple of months take cuttings of your favourites. This is good gardening practice because not only do you get plants for free but with plants like Salvias often these will die out in the winter if planted in wet clay like soil. By taking cuttings you will have new plants to plant out next spring. Also, so many shrubs and trees are providing excellent cutting material so take those soft wood cuttings and if you want Box hedging areas in your garden or absolutely adore Lavender and want a lovely Lavender patch or edging, take cuttings now and increase your stock of these useful plants. It will save you so much money in the long run.

Seeds

As the season progresses collect seeds of some of your favourite plants. Always collect on very dry days, select a stem filled with ripe seeds on and place inside a paper bag. Hang upside down and wait a few days. Once the seeds have all fallen into the bottom of the bag, sow these immediately into seed and cutting compost with perlite added, only water from the base of the tray and leave in a warm position but sheltered. Label the seeds.



Pruning

Prune spring flowered shrubs now. Select all stems that have produced flowers, trim these to the base and the plant will then produce a selection of new shoots this year ready for flowering more next year. With Lilac cut down past the flowered part of the stem. Summer flowering plants can be pruned at the end of summer.

Drying of flowers

Remember to cut flowers just before they open all their flowers for drying. Hang upside down in an airy position in the house and tie with string. Try growing some dried flowers and harvest these at the end of summer. Xerochrysum bracteatum, Statice, Nigella seed pods, Consolida (Larkspur). Drumstick scabious, (Scabious stellata 'Sternkugel') and Craspedia globosa are all easy enough to grow and will reward with flowers and interest for at least three years.

Cut flowers

These have become very popular over the last few years, and I am delighted. Grow some annuals just for picking, use bulbs also and some perennials. Construct a bed ideally where you are growing vegetables so both can be harvested at the same time. Incorporate plenty of well-rotted manure or compost. Plant out and sow the annuals. With bulbs you will have to wait until the autumn when the bulbs are available again. As gardeners we are all very different, if I suggest a particular plant that perhaps you the reader may not like, for example sunflowers maybe you prefer more dainty flowers like cornflowers and cosmos, find what you like to grow and as I like to say, "Have a go!"

Herbs

Sow parsley, chervil and dill. Take cuttings from lavender and cut the flowers for drying. Mint, if weak dig it all up and only select strong parts of the runners and replant out again in rich moist soil, preferably prevent it from spreading everywhere. Pick and dry herbs regularly or add to ice cubes so you can add these to any dish you are cooking. Rosemary, sage and thyme all dry out nicely and useful for winter use to and again saves you money.

So Happy gardening folks this summer, do a little and often in the garden and it will look good all summer long.

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