

WELCOME James Dunn, Managing Director of Promar International



Welcome to the February edition of Promar Matters.

This month we consider the importance of planning in advance. As we start to notice the days getting longer this can manifest itself in many ways over the

next few weeks, as spring approaches.

There are many technical considerations to be made such as nutrient management plans, forage plans and organising the contractor to be with you when you need him. In this issue, we consider two other technical essentials; the importance of sufficient available water and early season management of grazing covers.

Meanwhile, in the office, we consider the importance of the approaching requirement for real time filing of tax returns. There has been some debate as to when this will become a requirement, but April 2019 now appears to be the deadline, with some exemptions.

Enjoy the read and please get in touch if you need further details.

EARLY TURNOUT KEY TO GRAZING EFFICIENCY



Producers are being encouraged to plan for early grazing, despite the wet conditions experienced by many in the second half of 2017.

Michael Calvert, Promar's Farm Business Consultant for Northern Ireland explains why getting the cows out to graze early is key in maximising grass production for the 2018 season.

"With the wet conditions seen by many, producers fear that an early turnout will lead to ground poaching," says Michael.

"However, if cows haven't made a full grazing rotation by mid-April, a flush of growth in May and June means grass covers are often above 3,000kg DM/ha, which makes grazing down to the target residual of 1,500kg DM/ha impossible. If covers get out of control in May and June, the rest of the grazing season becomes very challenging."

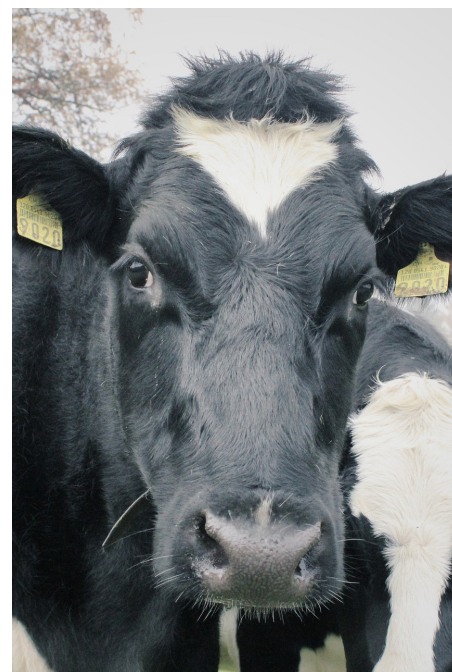
Michael recommends walking the farm regularly from mid-February to understand when individual fields are ready to be grazed. "A blanket approach doesn't work at turnout. The readiness of fields should be analysed on an individual basis to monitor grass covers and soil moisture levels.

"At this stage the focus should be on creating the grass wedge rather than necessarily having grazed grass as a significant proportion of the cows' nutritional requirements.

"This should drive an earlier turnout for many and allow 60% of the farm to be grazed by mid-March, which in Promar's experience is a suitable target," he adds.

"Although for some an early turnout may not be achievable, there are lots of techniques that can help to minimise damage to sward and soil. Reviewing your policy to include percentage of farm grazed will allow for a more targeted approach to grassland management, helping to improve overall grazing efficiency and drive profits."

For more information on Promar's services in Northern Ireland and grassland management, please contact via Michael Calvert on 07980 694389 or Michael.Calvert@genusplc.com



DON'T LET WATER LIMIT YOUR MILK PRODUCTION



It is widely reported that a 40% reduction in a dairy cow's water intake can reduce milk production by 25%.

Therefore, ensuring that there is adequate access to water 24 hours a day is vital to avoid costly drops in yield, explains Caroline Tilner, Promar Farm Consultant.

"Cows need five litres of water for every litre of milk produced, which means that high yielding cows can require up to 150 litres of water per day. If water requirements aren't met it can have a big impact on milk production," says Caroline.

Basic considerations such as trough space and water flow rates can have an impact on meeting peak demand, she explains.

"A single animal requires 700mm of trough space to ensure that pushing is kept to a minimum and that passive cows can get to the water. Cows are very social animals, so it's important that at least 10% of the herd can drink at any one time," she adds.

"Promar's experience shows that for most herds the objective should be to provide a flow rate to the trough of at least 10 litres per minute, as cows are fast drinkers. If this can't be achieved in your current system, then a booster pump or extra covered storage tanks can help to achieve this target."

Once adequate space is achieved, trough size should be the next element to challenge. However bigger does not always mean better, warns Caroline. "The provision of fresh, clean water is

important to maximise intake, therefore a high-water turnover is required, which lends itself to smaller tanks.

"Through careful attention to detail and the provision of fresh clean water in plentiful supply, producers can avoid water consumption becoming the limiting factor in milk production."

For more information please contact Caroline Tilner on 07813 438238 or via Caroline.Tilner@genusplc.com



BE PREPARED FOR 'MAKING TAX DIGITAL'



Businesses that turnover more than the VAT threshold will be required to keep digital records from April 2019.

Tryphena James, UK Farm Business Accounts (FBA) Manager at Promar explains what farms will need to do to comply, and how Promar can help affected businesses.

"From April 2019 it will be compulsory for any business with a turnover above the VAT threshold, currently £85,000, to keep

digital VAT records under new legislation 'Making Tax Digital'," says Tryphena.

This should help to ensure that the level of tax farm businesses pay is correct and should be viewed as a positive change. It will also give farmers and their advisors access to more accurate data, which in turn can help evaluate performance and drive efficiencies.

"Promar is working with software provider FarmPlan, and HMRC to ensure that our FBA service meets all of the requirements, while keeping it as simple and straight forward as possible for customers."

VAT returns are already completed monthly or quarterly so in most cases

there will be very little additional work involved. Businesses under the threshold can also choose to opt-in to the system, explains Tryphena.

"The move to 'Making Tax Digital' will encourage more accurate digital records, and greater insight into performance, both of which will continue to be key for dairy supply chain businesses in the future."

For more information on FBA and how it can aid your business, speak to your Farm Business Secretary, or contact Tryphena James on 07772 227983 or via Tryphena.James@genusplc.com