Grass Growth

Growth rates are well below normal.
• Soil temperatures are low for the time of year.
• Growth rates of 5 to 15 kgs of Dry Matter per hectare per day are being recorded.
• For optimal animal performance, grass digestibility needs to be close to 80%.

Budget Grass

Allocate grass to cows on a daily basis.
• Budget what grass is available.
• The aim is to reduce the amount of silage being eaten by the cow.
• Wet grass silage is probably the worst forage to feed to a cow from a milk protein point of view.
• The concentrate being fed should not be reduced significantly as the cow is heavily reliant on it.
• Grass quality is variable depending on levels of carryover.
• The type of concentrate fed should not change during the turnout phase.

Managing Turnout

Cows need care.
• Milk yields can drop, milk protein can decrease and cows can get digestive upsets and scours.
• Milk butterfat levels can also decrease due to the introduction of soft grass.
• Changing too much at once will drop the total intake of feed.
• This will lead to reduced performance and increased stress levels.
• Every dietary change should be gradual, turn cows out for 2 to 3 hours initially.
• Keep some indoor forage or buffer feed in the diet.
• Provide a source of long fibre (hay, baled silage or straw) as grazed grass can be low in fibre.
• Reducing concentrate too much and too quickly will crash performance.
• Cows should only move out by day initially.
• Any overdue stress will reduce cow body condition and cow fertility.
• Good animal health and performance during March and April are critical to a good breeding season.
• Grass Tetany is easily prevented by feeding Magnesium.
• Feeding Cal. Mag. in the concentrate is an effective means of preventing Grass Tetany.
• GAIN Winter Feeds have 2 ozs Cal. Mag. in 4.5 kgs (10 lbs).
• GAIN Pature Feeds have 2 ozs Cal. Mag. in 2.5 kgs (5 lb).

Mineral

Many herds are also deficient in minerals particularly Copper, Selenium and Iodine.
• Herds deficient in Copper, Selenium and Iodine will not go back in calf.
• Infertility is a major cost and loss of income.