



January 2026 Area Meetings

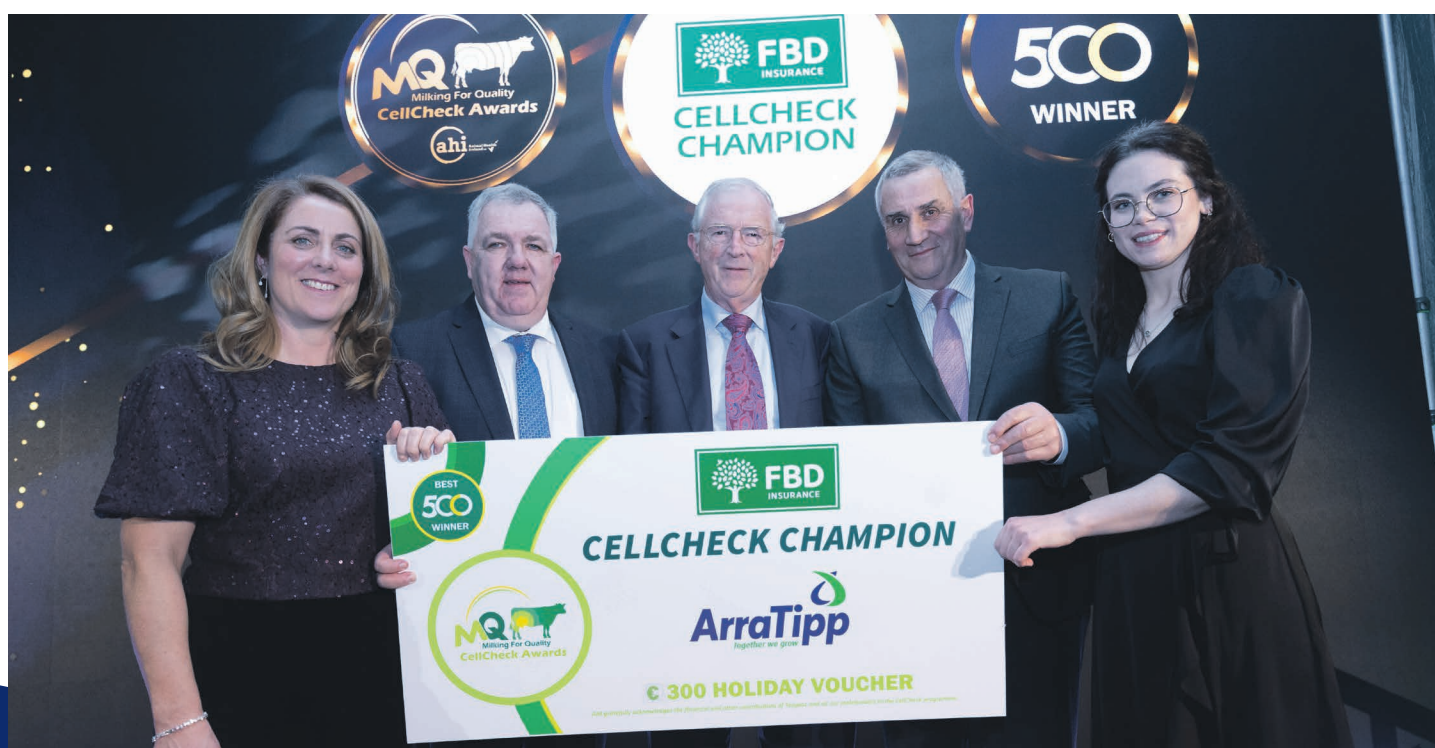
Date	Venue	Time
7 th January	Abbey Court Hotel, Nenagh, Tipperary	8pm
8 th January	Loughrea Hotel, Loughrea, Galway	8pm
13 th January	County Arms Hotel, Birr, Offaly	8pm
14 th January	Ballykisteen Hotel, Limerick Junction	8pm
19 th January	Talbot Hotel, Carlow	8pm

ArraTipp AHI Cellcheck Winners for 2024

Joe and Mary Hayes of Kiltormer County Galway are the ArraTipp Co-op winner of the 2024 AHI Cellcheck Milking for Quality award. Joe and Mary have been milking in Kiltormer since 1972 on 42 hectares with an additional 14 hectares of forestry and bog. They currently are milking 50 British Holstein Friesian cows in a six-unit parlour. Milk recording is carried out 4 times per year with the first milk recording carried out around St Patricks Day. Joe finds that

without a milk recording you are working in the dark in terms of SCC. When drying off cows, attention to detail is key to ensure teat ends are pristine before administering tubes or sealer. At housing, there is a cubicle available for every cow and heifer. Cubicles are cleaned and limed twice daily for the full housing period, with scrapers running regularly throughout the day. Along with this, Joes use a barrier teat dip for the duration of the housing period. Tails are clipped

regularly and immediately after drying off and calving. Joe finds getting cows out to grass early in the spring is a big help in keeping SCC down. Alongside the milking machine is serviced regularly to ensure its in top working order. In conclusion, Joe believes "prevention is better than cure" and in 2024 only had one case of mastitis throughout the year. Joe and Mary credit their low SCC to meticulous attention to detail and knowing each cow's history.



Joe Hayes being presented with his Cellcheck Champion Award alongside his ArraTipp Farm Relations Advisor Clare Clabby, at the recent AHI Cellcheck Quality for Milking awards last month.

ArraTipp AHI Cellcheck Winners for 2024

The annual Animal Health Ireland CellCheck Milking for Quality Awards 2024 took place on Thursday November 27th in Killashee House, Naas County Kildare. The CellCheck awards are awarded to the top five hundred milk suppliers for Somatic Cell Counts (SCC). The limit for the average SCC in 2024 was 75,000 cells. There were fifty-seven milk suppliers from ArraTipp presented with an award on the night. This is an excellent achievement, and we want to congratulate all the ArraTipp winners on their award.

This is the 12th year of the Cell Check Top 500 Quality milk awards, and the quality of milk supplied is increasing year on year. To have achieved a place in the Cell Check Top 500 Quality Milk Suppliers is an indication of the commitment which is applied to producing quality milk.

JOE HAYES	GALWAY
EOIN TOOHEY	TIPPERARY
JOHN GILLIAN & DAVID ARMITAGE	TIPPERARY
TOM CAHILL	GALWAY
PADRAIG LEONARD	GALWAY
RONAN DALTON	OFFALY
RODERICK WHYTE	GALWAY
SEAMUS GREALLY	TIPPERARY
COLM MADDEN	GALWAY
JAMES TRAYERS	GALWAY
PATRICK RYAN	GALWAY
VINCENT & CONOR O'BRIEN	GALWAY
EAMONN LEE	OFFALY
TIM FOGARTY	TIPPERARY
DONAL GLEESON	TIPPERARY
PAT TOM & DAVID FARRELL	LAOIS
JOHN MURPHY	GALWAY
PJ & SEAN TEEHAN	OFFALY
ARDOUR FARM LTD.	GALWAY
ROBERT COOKE	GALWAY

JOHN FRAWLEY.	TIPPERARY
MICHAEL RYAN	TIPPERARY
ANDREW HOGAN	TIPPERARY
JOHN MCCARTHY	TIPPERARY
MICHAEL SHRAHAN	OFFALY
BILL LOUGHNANE	OFFALY
LIAM BRENNAN	TIPPERARY
JOHN JOESPHINE & ALAN MULCAHY	TIPPERARY
DERRICK & DEBBIE FORDE	GALWAY
DAMIEN SKERRIT	GALWAY
MMC O'REILLY FARM	WESTMEATH
KIERAN KELLY	GALWAY
SEAN FAHY	GALWAY
SHARON HENNESSY	GALWAY
GREGORY & MICHAEL KIRWAN	GALWAY
MICHAEL FREENEY	GALWAY
DAVID HAYES	GALWAY
PATRICK HANRAHAN	GALWAY
GERARD COSTELLO	GALWAY
JOHN RYAN	TIPPERARY

KIERNAN & TIMMY RYAN	TIPPERARY
MARTIN MURPHY	LAOIS
MICHAEL SCOTT LARKIN	GALWAY
THOMAS CASEY	TIPPERARY
PADRAIG CONOR & MARY CAMON	OFFALY
KEVIN LYNCH	TIPPERARY
GEORGE KENT	WATERFORD
EOIN DARCY	WATERFORD
DON MCLEAN	TIPPERARY
BERNARD KELLY	ROSCOMMON
IVAN AUSTIN	TIPPERARY
JOHN & SEAN GIBBONS	GALWAY
THOMAS AND EDMOND RYAN	TIPPERARY
JOHN MOONEY	TIPPERARY
DERMOT & MICHAEL FOGARTY	TIPPERARY
THOMAS GOLDSBORO	TIPPERARY
JAMES FOGARTY	TIPPERARY

Managing the dry period

A successful dry period is the foundation to a successful lactation next Spring. Spring calving herds will have the majority of their cows dried off at this stage of the year. Monitor cows for the first 2 – 3 weeks after dry-off as this is the time cows are at highest risk of picking up a new mastitis infection. Keeping cubicles cleaned and limed once a day has shown to reduce the risk of new mastitis infections over the dry period. In cows that have been dried off with teat seal only, twice daily cleaning and liming of the cubicles is recommended to avoid new mastitis infections.

Aim to have automatic scrapers run

approximately every 3 hours, as this will help keep cubicles cleaner. In sheds with cubicles, a minimum of one cubicle per cow should be made available. If space is an issue, it is important to prioritise heifers for adequate cubicle space. In bedded housing, cows should be stocked at a maximum of 7.5 m² per cow.

The dry period is an opportunity to access cows Body Condition Score (BCS). The target BCS at calving is 2.75 – 3.25. Now is the time to take necessary steps to have cows within this target. Over conditioned cows at calving (BCS great than 3.25) are at higher risk for ketosis, displaced abomasum (twisted

stomach), milk fever, mastitis and metritis. A target of less than 10 % of the herd with these diseases after calving is recommended. An incidence rate over 10% is concerning and is recommended to investigate.

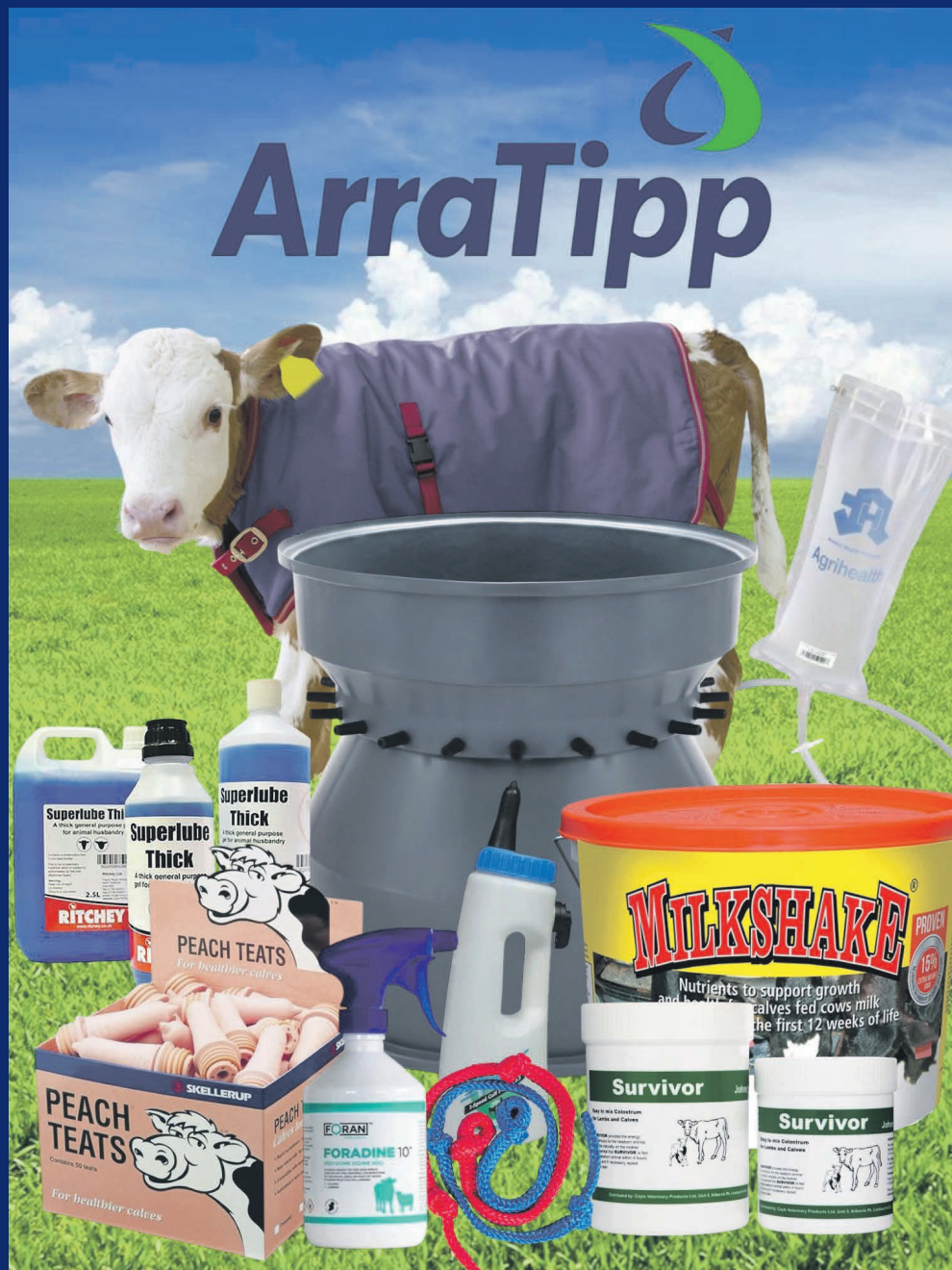
The mineral content of the diet can also majorly contribute to the incidence of disease after calving, particularly milk fever. Silage from reseeded ground which may be high in lime (calcium) or high in potash (K) can contribute to high levels of milk fever at calving and in the days after. Silage testing is recommended.

For any queries on nutritional advice contact Michael Murphy on 087 955 3677

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Signpost Farms Update

The out block that started it all

Farming 125ha at Kilmurry, Tynagh, Loughrea, Co. Galway, Conor O'Brien milks a herd of 144 high EBI Holstein cows and carries a dairy-beef enterprise in partnership with his father Vincent and mother Mary.

Recently recognised as the 'Improving Soil Health Category Winner' of the Teagasc FBD Environmental Sustainability Awards, Conor's journey into farming was greatly aided by the trust bestowed in him by his parents.

Elaborating on this, Conor explained: "My father gave me the opportunity at a youngish enough age to make my own decisions. He transferred one of the outblocks to me for my suckler enterprise that was more a part-time hobby at the time.

"It would have been easier for him to keep it himself, but he took the chance on me. If he and my mother didn't give me the chance to learn and develop together with them, we wouldn't be where we are today," Conor explained.

From this beginning, Conor has seen the family's farm grow, all the while focused on being technical efficient, profitable and environmentally sustainable.

Supplying Arrabawn Tipperary Co-op and guided by Signpost programme advisor Liam Quinn and local Teagasc advisor, Tom Murphy, cows on the farm are on track to produce 470kg of milk solids each year, carried at a stocking rate of 2.4LU/ha.

Grass utilisation reached 8.7 tonnes DM/ha in 2024, while herd genetics continue to improve, with an EBI of €251 and Dairy Beef Index (DBI) of €74, supporting profitability and a carbon footprint of 0.9 kg CO₂ eq per kg FPCM.

Nutrient management is central. In 2024, 132 kg N/ha was applied, 66% as protected urea. All slurry is spread with low-emission slurry spreading (LESS), and nutrient management planning informs applications. Soil fertility has improved as a result, 34% of soils are now optimum, up from 26%, while AgNav records a nitrogen surplus of 125kg N/ha.

Conor engages actively in sustainability programmes. As a Waters EIP participant, he has installed fencing, solar pumps, rainwater management and planted 135 metres of hedgerow. As a Signpost Demonstration Farmer, he increased protected urea use to 66%, boosted clover to 37% of the milking platform, and grows 14 acres of red clover silage.

Future plans include a new slatted shed, solar panels, and continued genetic progress, highlighted by three bulls sold to AI stations with EBIs of €343 to €358.

Improving soil health

There has been an emphasis on soil health on



this farm for many years and the main actions have been:

- While maintaining efficient dairy production, the O'Brien family have prioritised the protection of soil biodiversity by recognising and utilising the natural potential of the low-input land and extensively grazed ground. This approach shows that productivity and sustainability can go hand in hand when soil health is placed at the centre of farm management.
- 34% of this farm has good overall soil fertility i.e. pH 6.2+, P Index 3+ & K Index 3+. Over 90% of the farm is optimum for soil pH, 56% is Index 3 & 4 for P and 62% is Index 3 & 4 for K. The grazing block around the parlour is very good but the outside blocks are pulling down the average.
- Conor is very conscious of soil structure and minimising compaction on the farm. He avoids heavy machinery and livestock on the land in difficult conditions.

Conor's farm includes three contrasting types of grassland: conventionally managed grassland, a low-input grassland and an extensively grazed pasture. Research has shown that more diverse swards - those with a mix of different plant species - tend to support more diverse bacterial and fungal communities in the soil. This microbial diversity is important for healthy nutrient cycling, soil structure and overall resilience of the farming system.

Conor was recently involved in a soil health project with Johnstown Castle, led by PhD student Karla Burke, and the evidence from this project is that each of Conor's fields showed above-average bacterial and fungal abundance compared to 72 grassland sites sampled across Ireland last year. High microbial abundance indicates an active, living soil system that works with the farmer to grow grass efficiently and sustainably.

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