



Teagasc FBD Environmental Sustainability Awards 2025

Category Winner – Improving Soil Health Award Vincent & Conor O’ Brien



Picture: Vincent & Mary O’ Brien accepting the “Improving Soil Health” Award at the Teagasc FBD Environmental Sustainability Awards 2025 in the Heritage Hotel Killenard, County Laois in early October.

Massive congratulations to the O’Brien family for this excellent accomplishment.

FARMER FOCUS – John, Martina and Cora Lonergan

1. Family

My name is John Lonergan, I am farming with my wife Martina and my daughter Cora just outside Cahir in Dranganmore Co. Tipperary. I also have a daughter Amy and a son Eoin that works fulltime off farm.

2. Farm Enterprise

We are milking 90 cows this year and rear all the dairy replacements and keep about 20 beef calves. The beef calves are sold as weanlings in the Autumn of their 1st year. We run a full Spring calving dairy herd producing around 520kgs Milk Solids/Cow/Year. We plan to feed 1 tonne of concentrate per cow per year and are on target to hit this figure this year.

All replacements and beef stock are reared on an outside block.

3. Land

The milking platform is dry clay soil. The milking platform comprises of 29Ha with the remaining 35Ha divided in four blocks.

4. Work Life Balance

Since Cora has returned farming, we have changed our working routine on the farm to help take more time to do other activities like hill walking. During the busy period in the Spring we

all work together and from mid-April onwards we take every second weekend from then on. Cora works part time generally doing about 20hrs per week to learn her trade. She manages all the calf rearing, Martina does the grassland management and the majority of the milking from May onwards and John does all the tractor work as he cuts his own silage and spreads his own slurry and also does all the milking in the Spring. Cora’s partner Darren also helps when silage season is in full swing.

Since these measures have been put in place, we feel we have a healthier lifestyle and more relaxed and flexible working environment.

5. NDC Sustainable Award – Lowest Carbon Footprint

We were delighted to have won the lowest carbon footprint award in the National Dairy Council in 2023. We put a big emphasis on being more sustainable to ensure our farm will be a viable business for the next generation.

6. Sustainable Measures on Farm

- 85% of the farm have a presence of clover in the sward, with the aim to have 100% in the coming years
- All Slurry/Dairy Washings is spread be LESS



- 80% of the available Slurry is aimed to be spread in the Spring, with the remainder being spread after the 1st Cut
- All Straight N is spread using Protected Urea
- A big focus is put on EBI to maximise genetic merit of the next generation by sexed semen being used on only the cows that suit the selected criteria
- Collars are being used on the herd to help improve conception rates and monitor the overall health of the herd
- Soil sampling is completed every three years, and a plan is put in place to help maintain P, K and lime status

All these measures have helped our business be more sustainable, with the collars on the cows probably the best investment we have made in recent years to help improve overall health of the herd.

Health Certificates 2026

Each herd that supplies milk must be certified by your vet annually to meet specific animal health requirements as specified by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).

These certificates must be submitted to Arrabawn Tipperary each year. Please send the completed 2025 Certificate to your local Milk Advisor or to: Arrabawn Tipperary Co Op, Stafford Street, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary.

Health Certificates were included with your October 2025 milk statement package which you received in the post. Please contact our head office on 067 41800 if you need assistance.

Low lactose in late lactating Cows

What is lactose in milk?

Lactose is a natural sugar that is secreted in the udder of the cow. The presence of lactose in the milk gives milk its sweet taste. When lactose levels fall below a certain threshold (~4.25%) the milk is difficult to process. This is why we impose penalties when lactose levels fall below their minimum threshold

Why does lactose fall in Autumn?

Due to changes in the physiology and metabolism of the mammary gland in late lactation the lactose content in milk declines, coinciding with the decline in milk production. In an autumn calving herd where cows are calving over a 6-month period there are no major declines in milk constituents as it is balanced by cows at both ends of lactation. However, the problem is much more pronounced in a spring calving herd where all of the cows have calved in a 12-week period, and they enter into late lactation at the same time.

Management recommendations to help maintain milk lactose levels:

1. Monitor yield of cows, dry off any cows producing less than 8 litres/cows/day.
2. If average herd yield is less than 10 litres/cow/day then dry off the whole herd.
3. Cows with high SCCs produce low lactose milk, at any stage of lactation. Dry off these cows.

Nutritional recommendations to address falling milk lactose levels:

Nutrition also has a role to play. In late lactation there will also be a more marked impact on lactose levels if cows are 'underfed' in terms of dry matter intake and energy intake not being high enough to maintain yield. This year cows still milking 15 litters have low lactose levels, indicating a severe shortage on energy intake.

1. Energy and protein intake in late lactation influence milk yield and milk constituents so it is essential that the cow's diet is sufficient to produce the volume of milk without using her own body reserves.

2. As the grazing rotation is being lengthened to close off paddocks it is important to supplement cows with a high energy dairy nut, protein 16-18%. This year levels will vary 2-6 kgs depending on milk yield, grass supply and grass quality.

Penalties for low Lactose

Over the next few weeks please monitor your lactose results. Lactose levels are tested after every collection and texted out to the farmer. The letter L in the text message stands for Lactose. The following penalties apply for low lactose levels.

Lactose greater than 4.25 = No penalty

Lactose less than 4.25 = 2 cent per litre penalty

Lactose less than 4.00 = 5 cent per litre penalty

Arrabawn Tipperary Milk App MilkedIn App

Server
selfservice.arrabawn.ie

Port

Member
1234567

Password

Log In

Home

Milk Collections

Quality Results

Solids

Financials

Comparison

Settings

Contact Us

HOME
Displays your most recent and current months' collections and test results

Milk Collections
Displays Collections by Period for current year and previous years

Quality Results
Displays Quality results by Period and Test Type

Solids
Displays Total kgs, Butterfat kgs, and Protein Kgs

Financials
Displays cent per litre and Payment Value per period. User can drilldown to the detail relating to that payment.

Comparison
Provides user with ability to do a yearly comparison on milk data.

➤ **Download the MilkedIn app in the App Store or Play Store on your phone**

➤ **Contact your farm relations advisor to supply sign in details**

➤ **Milk Statements are available on the app on the 18th of every month**

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Preparing for dry off this winter

By Clare Clabby

As we come to the end of the lactation for spring calving herds it is time to prepare for drying off and the dry period. A successful dry period is the foundation for a successful lactation in the following year. The dry period is an important time to cure any existing infections in the herd, however it is also critical to prevent any new infections from occurring to achieve a successful dry period.

There are a few actions that can be carried out in the next few weeks to prepare for drying-off.

1. Review bulk tank SCC

The bulk tank SCC can be reviewed at this point of the year. Herds with an average bulk tank SCC of 200,000 or less should consider if their herd is suitable for selective dry cow treatment. Please contact your milk advisor or vet when considering selective dry cow treatment.

Some herds may find that their bulk tank SCC has been increased considerably from early or mid-lactation. This may indicate that there are subclinical infections spreading throughout the herd. It is recommended to contact your vet or milk advisor on what steps to take to control this.

Herds with an average bulk tank SCC over 200,000 consider reviewing their milk recording results, milking routine and mastitis management to reduce SCC in the following lactation.

2. Milk recording

Recent research shows the last milk recording within 30 to 45 days of dry-off is the most accurate when identifying cows without infections

Herds that are already milk recording, aim to have their last milk recording within 30 to 45 days (no more than 60 days) of dry-off. If drying off cows in batches, it is important to factor in when the last cows will be dried off when booking a date for your milk recording.

For herds that haven't been milk recording, one milk recording 30 to 45 days before dry-off would give an accurate picture of cows SCC before dry-off.

3. Clip cows tails

As weather conditions deteriorate it can be harder to keep cows legs and udder clean. Keeping cows tails clipped helps reduce the presence of dung on legs and udders.



Figure 1. Front teats (circled orange) are cleaned first, then followed by the rear teats (circled purple). When administering tubes, start in the opposite direction. Rear teats first (circled purple) followed by front teats (circled orange). This avoids contaminating cleaned teats with your arms.

4. Review cows yields and calving dates

Review the milk yields from your last milk recording and identify cows that may need to be dried off early. Cows should be dried off if yielding less than 9 litres per day. Herds that aren't milk recording can use the bulk tank volumes to calculate the average yield per cow. If using this method, cows should be dried off when the average yield is 11 litres per day to prevent over milking of first lactation cows.

For best outcomes when drying off with sealer only, it is recommended cows have a milk yield of less than 15 litres per day when drying off.

Review expected calving dates for next spring from AI records or scanning results. Cows with low Body Condition Score less than 2.5 (thin cows) and first lactation cows may benefit from a longer dry period. The optimal dry period length is 60-80

days.

This allows time for old cells and tissue in the udder to be removed and allow for the repair and growth of new cells. This process optimises milk production and helps reduce SCC in the following lactation. Dry period lengths should be a minimum of 30 days.

5. Reduce milk yield

Take steps to reduce milk yield with cows producing more than 15 litres per day approximately a week before planned dry-off. This can be achieved by implementing a maintenance diet, by reducing cow energy intake. Reduce concentrate feeding to less than 2 kg per day. If cows are housed, feed low DMD silage or a straw and silage mix to reduce energy intake. Restrict grass allocations for cows that are still grazing. Water should not be restricted and should be provided at

all times throughout the drying off process.

For some high yielding cows, transitioning to once a day milking 3-4 days before drying off may help reduce yield.

The dry-off procedure

At the last milking, milk cows out as usual. Teat spray/dip can be applied as normal and teats dried afterwards with a paper towel.

1. Clean teats

Using the cotton swabs soaked in surgical spirit, clean teat ends until dirt is no longer visible. Clean front teats first, then followed by the rear teats, see Figure 1. This avoids contaminating the cleaned teat with your arm.

2. Administer tubes

When administering dry cow tubes, start in the opposite direction as you cleaned, rear teats are infused with tubes first followed by the front teats, see Figure 1. Again, this avoids contaminating the cleaned teats.

When administering tubes the tip of the nozzle is inserted into the teat canal and the contents infused. If possible, avoid inserting the nozzle fully into the teat canal as this may cause damage internally, particularly in first lactation cows or cows with small teats. It is recommended when administering antibiotic tubes, the antibiotic is massaged up into the udder.

When administering the sealer, pinch the base of the teat before inserting the nozzle of the sealer tube to ensure sealer remains in the teat cistern. When administering both an antibiotic tube and a sealer tube, it recommended to work on each teat individually, in other words administer the antibiotic tube followed by the sealer tube to one teat before moving on to the next teat.

3. Teat spray/dip

Spray or dip all teats after administering tubes. It is recommended to leave cows to stand 20-30 minutes after drying-off. If cows are housed, ensure cubicles are clean and dry before cows have access.

The Dry Period

It is recommended a maintenance diet is maintained for 3-4 days after drying off. Maintain housing in a clean hygienic manner throughout the dry period. There are two time points in the dry period when cows are most at risk of picking up a new infection.

This is 2 weeks after drying off (when the udder is stopping milk production) and 2 weeks before calving (when the udder is preparing for milk

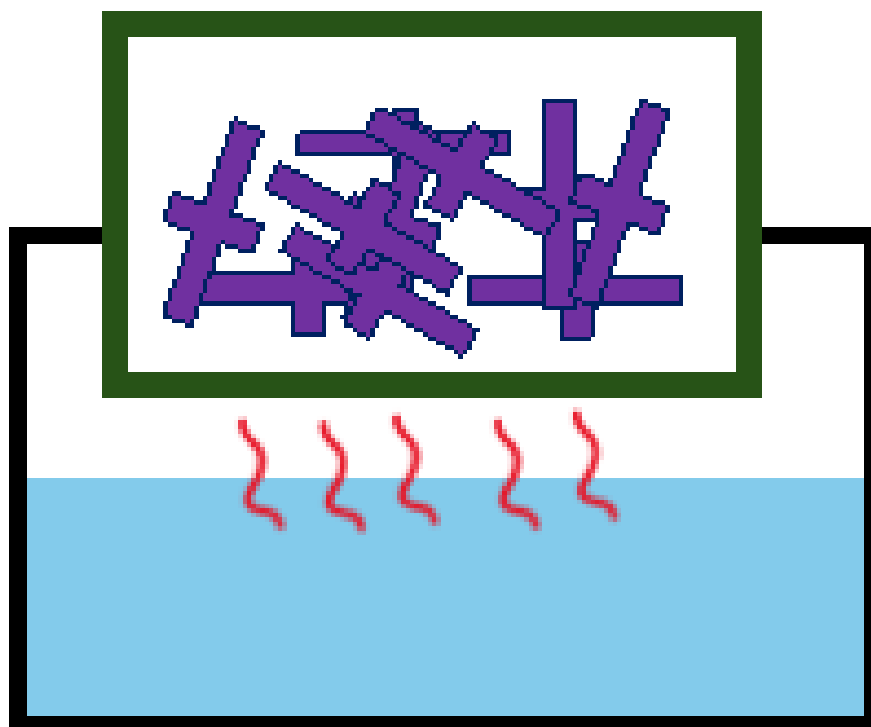


Figure 2. Green bucket containing sealer tubes, sitting in larger bucket of hot water. Avoid putting tubes directly into water.

production again). It is recommended cubicles are cleaned and limed twice daily at these high-risk periods. However, it is recommended that cubicles are cleaned and limed daily for the duration of the dry period to reduce the risk of new infections, particularly in herds using selective dry cow treatment.

Some helpful tips for drying off

Drying-off is a separate job to milking. If possible, separate cows to be dried off from the main herd of cows the day before.

If possible, dry off cows in small manageable groups of 20-30 cows at a time. In larger milking parlours (over 10 units), it may be helpful to milk half a row at a time to keep cows from getting agitated if left standing too long.

Dry off cows in groups according to their treatment. If using sealer only on cows, do them separately to those getting antibiotic tubes to avoid mix ups.

Prepare cotton swabs for cleaning teats, these

can be made up by soaking cotton wool in surgical spirits.

Store these swabs in plastic food bags to help keep clean when drying-off and to keep surgical spirits from evaporating. Do not prepare more than a day or two before planned use. These swabs can be used to clean gloves between cows.

A head torch/lamp can be useful to improve visibility when drying-off cows.

Some sealer tubes can be difficult to push the plunger, especially if stored in a cool place. Storing sealers in a warm place the night before can help reduce the stiffness in the plunger. Alternatively, place the bucket containing sealer tubes into a bucket of warm water, to indirectly warm up the sealers, see Figure 2.

AVOID PUTTING TUBES DIRECTLY INTO WATER.

Putting sealers directly into water can potentially contaminate tubes with bacteria and cause an outbreak of mastitis.

Arrabawn Tipperary Board of Directors visit to Tippagral



North Tipperary Farmers' Haggart Launch Meeting

Hello everyone,

My name is Mary, and I'm proud to be one of 10 National Farm Safety Community Champions with Irish Rural Link.

I'm delighted to share that I have teamed up with the New Futures Farming Group for a special event – the North Tipperary Farmers' Haggart Launch Meeting, taking place on:

Wednesday, 29th October at 7.30pm

The Community Hall, Pallas Street, Borrisoleigh

Together with New Futures Farming Group, we'll be joined by inspiring speakers from Embrace FARM and Jim of the Mill. Come along to learn more about the Farmers' Haggart initiative, meet fellow farmers, and enjoy an evening of community and connection.

The aim of the Farmers' Haggart is to bring back the tradition of the "great neighbour" – giving farmers a chance to come together, get to know one another, offer support, and have some fun along the way.

This event is about connection, wellbeing, and building strong local farming networks – celebrating the community spirit that makes rural Ireland so special.

I'm really looking forward to seeing you all there!

In the meantime, have a think about creating your own Farmers' Haggart group – and feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

**For more information, visit: www.farmers4safety.ie/farmers-haggart
#IrishRuralLink #Farmers4Safety #FarmingCommunity #FarmSafety #DAFM**

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