



NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards 2026 Breen Farm

ArraTipp wishes to congratulate our milk supplier Simon Breen who won the Lowest Carbon Footprint award, at the recent NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards 2026, held in the Lyrate Hotel in Kilkenny, Wednesday 30th September.

Simon Breen and his family were one of 12 finalists who were shortlisted for the NDC and Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards 2026, which sets out to find and celebrate the top-quality milk farmers in Ireland.

Breen Farm

Some of the cows grazing the milking platform at Gurteen are as Simon Breen will tell you with a straight face, no taller than a great dane. They are small, compact and maybe unfashionable to some eyes. However, they are among the most productive animals in the country at the one thing that decides a milk cheque: solids. That contradiction is the whole story of this farm, and it is no accident. It was bred, measured and managed into being.

The Breen family, Simon and his wife Carol, with their children Julia, Sarah and Peter, farming alongside Simon's parents, Peter and Sheila, milk 254 cows near Emly in the west of Tipperary. This spring they were named the very first Milk Supplier of the Year for the newly merged ArraTipp Co-op, an honour the family describe as representing not just their own yard but their parish. Simon is the second generation here: his parents bought the original 56 hectares in 1979, and three generations have since grown it into a 127-hectare business that comfortably supports two families.

Start with the figures, because Simon does. The herd delivered 501kg of milk solids per cow in 2025 off just 708kg of meal and sits in the top 1% of the co-op for both butterfat and protein. Its carbon index of €24 is top 1% nationally; its EBI of 168 puts it in the national top 7%. Most telling of all is a single ratio Simon keeps in his head, 1.03kg of milk solids delivered for every kilo of cow. It is the number that explains the small cow. "Every farmer needs to work out his own system," he says. "If you can't explain that system in less than five minutes, it's too complicated."



Twelve years of crossbreeding built the herd he wanted. The last pure Friesian, a remarkable 13th-lactation cow, left only this year; Friesians were crossed first with Jerseys, then with New Zealand Kiwi-cross genetics, chasing fertility, high solids and a low carbon footprint. Today every dairy replacement is bred from sexed semen, while seven in ten calves are beef-sired, a easy calving Belgian Blue over low-beef-merit cows to produce a calf buyers will queue for. "With such low beef-merit cows, we have to use a substantial bull to get an easily saleable calf," Simon explains, and careful body-condition management keeps calving trouble-free.

Quality is decided long before the cluster goes on, this has been a chlorine-free dairy since 2017, years ahead of the requirement. TBC results spend most of the year in single figures and the SCC is held comfortably inside target through the season. High-SCC cows are drafted, leg-banded and milked last through a cluster-flush system. Seven in ten



cows get a teat sealer only at drying-off,

No intramammary antibiotic tubes were used in lactating cows during 2025. The few cases where treatment was required, were investigated using quarter-milk samples and managed with veterinary-prescribed injectable medication.

Grass is the engine behind the solids. The herd is out for 310 days a year, from early February to mid-December, and the farm meets the Grass-Fed standard. Simon walks the farm and measures grass 50 times a year on PastureBase, "you can't manage something you don't measure", and has pushed clover to 27% of the grazing platform, with 77% of the silage ground now with red clover taking

NEWS

zero chemical nitrogen. Three-quarters of the chemical fertiliser used is protected urea; no straight urea or CAN goes out at all. He has strong views, cheerfully held: "Every farm should have a grasshopper and every parish a roller, but only roll reseeded ground."

Technology is useful only when it earns its place. Cow collars have been used for a decade to support heat detection and daily health surveillance. HerdApp organises animal records, PastureBase holds every grass measurement and nutrient input, GPS guides fertiliser spreading, and a field-measure app helps allocate the daily grazing allowance. The collars do not replace stockmanship; they sharpen it. The same is true in the calf shed, where colostrum is checked with a refractometer, heifer calves wear jackets when conditions demand it, and a JFC automatic calf feeder delivers consistent, accurately measured feeds monitors individual intakes, allowing any calf falling behind to be identified and attended to quickly.

The environmental work runs well past the paddock gate. The farm's carbon footprint sits at 0.76. A 1.25-hectare reed bed polishes grey water from the yard; two hectares of new native woodland, alder, birch, rowan, oak and whitethorn, and a fresh kilometre of whitethorn hedge have gone in, with a solar application pending. Simon is matter of fact about the trees: he has no intention of ever harvesting them. They will, as he puts it, still be standing there when he is long gone.

Animal health here is treated as detective work. When mastitis, cell count and lameness crept up, blood, milk and herbage testing traced the cause to high molybdenum in the ground, quietly locking up the selenium, iodine, phosphorus and zinc the cows needed; the fix, minerals delivered through the water, is pure Breen, find the number, then solve it. Cow comfort is engineered rather than assumed: more cubicles than cows, collars checked daily, batt latches, 1.5km of roadway surfaced with astroturf last winter, and every cow condition-scored twice a year by an outside assessor. Calf mortality for 2025 was 4.6%.

None of it would work without the people. Peter and Sheila are still hands-on with calves and herding, Carol runs calf-rearing and the grassland discussions, and the three children, Julia, Sarah and Peter – all have jobs on the yard, alongside a settled outside team led by full-timer Gleidson. Family life is protected as deliberately as the herd: cows dried off for Christmas, milkings dropped to 13 a week from mid-July with once-a-day milking on Sundays.

Breen Farm

Supplies to **ArraTipp**

Milk Yield (litres) | Cows
1,305,019 | 243

Milk Solids / Cow/kg*
501
Butterfat % | Protein %****
5.06 | 4

TBC | SCC****
(000 Cfu/ml) | (000 Cells/ml)
13 | 126
Teat Sealer only used
70%



Carbon Footprint***
0.76
Grazing Days
310
Protected Urea used
75%
Concentrate Fed/Cow/kg
708
Clover Distribution
27%

EBI | Sexed Semen
€168 | Yes

* ICBF
** Weighted
*** Bord Bia SDAS

Beyond the farm gate, Simon never misses his daughters' GAA matches and he chairs the parish text-alert group, sings in the Emly church choir, brings farm-safety talks to the local pre-school, mentors a UCD student at Moorepark each year, and chairs the Clover EIP discussion group, knowledge given as freely as it is taken. No stone was left unturned to

try and win this competition outright and, in an attempt, to influence proceedings, Simon's mother Sheila shared the family's secret brown-bread recipe with judge Karina Pierce.

Simon Breen breeds a cow that looks like nothing special and performs like everything. That, in the end, is the measure of the man behind her.



OCTOBER

SPECIAL PROMOTIONS



ArraTipp
Together we grow



NOW
€12.95

**Flamers Kings Starter
Fire Log 10's**



**10%
OFF**

**Doramax Injection
& Pour-on**



NOW
€359.95

**Cubic Meter
Meal Bin**

**PLUS FREE SCOOP
WITH EACH BIN**



NOW
€49.95

**Swampmaster
'Stormgear'
PU Waterproof
Jacket Navy**



5 FOR
€40.00
(€8.50 EACH)

ECO Blaze Briquettes



WAS: €295
NOW
€270

**White Rhino 1
Tonne**

Other Offers In-store!

www.arratippstores.ie

Completing a PastureBase Fodder Budget

With 40% of farms across Ireland having a significant deficit in the amount of fodder they need for next winter, assessing fodder in the yard and acting early to avoid severe deficits next spring is key.

Being aware of available fodder that's in the yard compared to the needs of livestock can make heading into the winter period less stressful. When deficits are noticed early actions can be planned and more strategic. Different options can be used to address these deficits to minimise losses. Where deficits must be filled a common option could be to import feed. This could be buying silage, straw, or hay. When dealing with buying feed, quality can

sometimes be an issue along with high prices. If this is not an option palm kernel, soya or soya hulls can be included in the diet.

With average costs running at €4.40 per cow per day compared to a previous €2.50. Removing underperforming stock from the herd could also be an option. Culling cows early that might present often with issues such as high stomatic cell count or lameness can take the pressure off stocks so much as 12.5 ton per cow.

How to complete a Fodder Budget

Fodder budgets can be done on the PastureBase Ireland website once

an account is set up. The application for budgets can be found in the farm management dropdown on the left-hand side. Select fodder available budget and select Add New. Enter the date and stock for the winter. Then enter all fodder available. After the total fodder available figure has been generated in tonnes then enter a full winter feed estimate. This is done by entering an estimate of the total number of days the animals are housed. Meal figures can also be updated which will reduce demand for fodder. Then compare total available fodder to winter feed estimate this will indicate a surplus or deficit.

The screenshot displays the PastureBase Ireland web application. On the left is a dark sidebar with a menu. The 'Farm Management' section is expanded, showing a sub-menu where 'Fodder Available Budget' is highlighted. The main content area features a table with columns for 'WALKED DATE', 'AVAILABLE FODDER (TONNES)', 'DEMAND / DAY (TONNES)', 'NO. OF DAYS', 'FODDER PERIOD', and 'ACTIONS'. An 'ADD NEW' button is located in the top right corner of the table area.

WALKED DATE	AVAILABLE FODDER (TONNES)	DEMAND / DAY (TONNES)	NO. OF DAYS	FODDER PERIOD	ACTIONS
-------------	---------------------------	-----------------------	-------------	---------------	---------

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

ArraTipp
Together we grow

**Special
Offers &
Spot
Prizes on
the Day!**

OPEN DAY

Mineral Open Day

Borrisoleigh Branch

Representatives from
Bimeda, Mayo Healthcare,
Grassland Agro and Inform
Nutrition on the day!



Tuesday
27th October



10am – 3pm

**All
Welcome
on the Day!**



**Borrisoleigh
E41 N670**

A day not to be missed!

The Role of hedgerows in maintaining and improving water quality and mitigating climate change

A hedged landscape is good for water quality. The root systems of hedgerows regulate the movement of water, absorbing and recycling nutrients like phosphorus or pesticides, thus reducing the risk of pollution to waterways. With the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) finding that nearly half of Ireland's rivers, lakes, canals, estuaries and coastal waters are of "unsatisfactory" water quality, this role hedgerows play is incredibly valuable. Hedgerows also help to reduce sediment from moving down slope, preventing excessive siltation in waterways which can clog up riverbeds and deteriorate aquatic habitats, stopping salmon and trout from spawning for example. For supporting water quality, aim for well-structured hedgerows with generous, unsprayed margins that help trap nutrients and sediment before they reach drains and rivers (while also supporting biodiversity). If planting a new native hedgerow, plant it perpendicular

to the main pathways that water tends to flow. A well-placed hedge breaks the pathway to the watercourse.

Climate Change Mitigation

Furthermore, research is increasingly highlighting the role hedgerows can play in climate change mitigation through carbon storage. Preliminary estimates by the EPA suggest that hedgerows and non-forest woodlands have the potential to store carbon, and with an estimated 186,000 hectares of hedgerows across Ireland, this contribution may be significant at a national level. Note that these estimates exclude potential emissions associated with hedgerow management or disturbance. Teagasc's Farm Carbon Project found that hedgerow management directly affects the amount of carbon that is stored over time. Intensively managed hedgerows have limited benefits for carbon. Less intensively managed, wider,



taller hedgerows that are managed on a cycle contain significantly higher amount of carbon. Thus, less intensive hedgerow management, rejuvenation of older hedges or planting of new hedgerows can enhance hedgerows' role in carbon storage.



Article by Eamon O'Connell, Summerhill Veterinary Clinic

As drying off time approaches, there are some key areas to focus on to optimise cow health, both over the winter period and at calving next spring.

Milk Recording

- Helps to make decisions around selective dry cow therapy (SDCT), but also around culling. Very important to get your final milk recording of the year completed close to drying off, so as to have the most up to date information on your herd.
- Identify problem cows first. A cow with greater than 1million of an SCC in 2 consecutive recordings is a "broken cow". Culling is the only option here.
- Equally, a cow that has shown repeated flare-ups of high SCC and/or mastitis should be high on the list for culling too. These cows will only act as reservoir of infection in the herd next spring.

Selective dry cow therapy (SDCT) - is the use of sealer only on individual cows at drying off.

- A cow must have an individual SCC of less than 100,000 all year as well as having no clinical case of mastitis.

- Younger cows are preferable as they tend to be lower risk. Be sure to get your vet involved who will be happy to look through milk recording data and help you pick out the right cows.
- Strict hygiene protocols must be adhered to in the parlour when using SDCT to avoid introducing any bacteria into the udder as the sealer is pushed in.
- Antibiotics - Analysis of milk samples is a must. Samples from cows with persistently high SCC or samples from clinical cases of mastitis are ideal. Results will detail the bacteria causing the issue as well as what antibiotics work to kill these bacteria.

Length of the dry period

- 60 days/ 8 weeks is the minimum.
- 90 days/ 12 weeks for thin cows and heifers as they require a longer dry period. The same goes for any cows with SCC issues that you intend to keep. A longer dry period allows the cells in the udder greater time to heal and therefore increases the likelihood that the cow will calve down with a healthy udder.

Body condition of cows at drying off

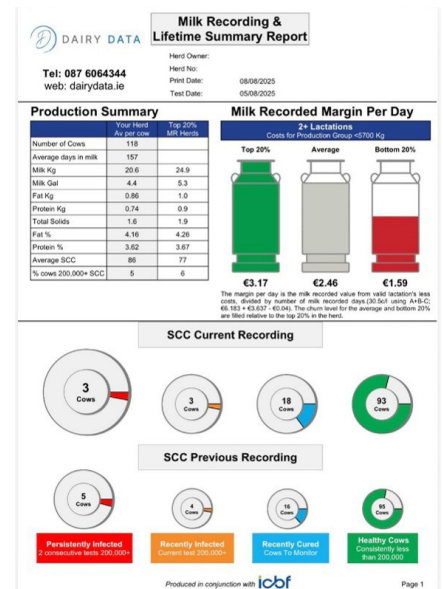
- The aim is to have cows calving at BCS 3.25
- Thin cows, BCS <2.5, need extra feeding over the winter.
- Over conditioned cows, BCS >3.75, need a tailored diet.
- With between only 60 and 90 days (dry off to calving) to fix BCS issues, a plan needs to be put in place asap.



L-R James Cleary (Dairy Data) and Eamon O'Connell (Summerhill Veterinary Clinic)

- Cows that are either too thin or too fat are at a much higher risk of various different health issues after calving which will severely affect both their fertility and their milk yield in 2027.

Drying off, and the time between dry off and calving, are critical times in the life of a cow. What happens at this time will determine how successful 2027 is, for individual cows and for the herd as a whole.



8-Actions for Change

5 Top Tips for October

Farmyard Manure

Closed period for spreading farmyard manure begins on November 1. Have all FYM spread before this deadline

Field Storage

There can be no field storage of farmyard manure during the closed period - no exceptions apply

Hedging

Prepare to plant new hedgerows by speaking to your supplier and ordering your plants and materials

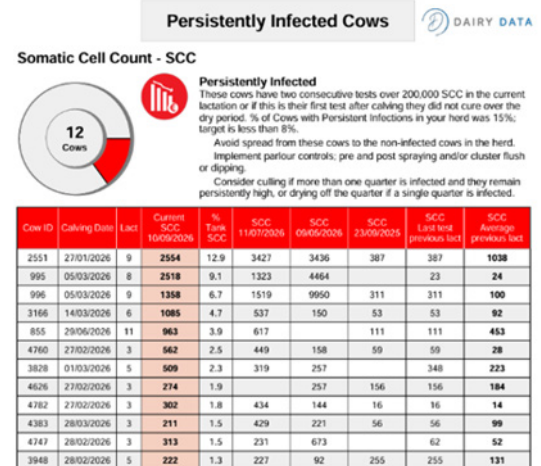
Soil Samples

Speak to your advisor and plan to take new soil samples as soon as possible

Autumn Cultivation

Ensure you maintain the required buffer margin along watercourses when sowing autumn crops

Step up for better water quality



Stay connected with us!! Check out our website for weekly farming updates. Find us at www.arratipp.ie Connect with us on social media on Twitter @arratippcoop and @milk4profit, and on Instagram @arratippstores for regular farming updates and promotional offers.

We are also on Facebook at ArraTipp Co Op. For further information or advice on any subjects or products mentioned in this newsletter Please ring 087 0963869 • Email: farmsupport@arratipp.ie • Check out our website www.arratipp.ie • Shop our online store at www.arratippstores.ie

We are also on TikTok @ArraTippStores