

THE DEALER

INSIDE IRISH FARMING

EMAIL: dealer@farmersjournal.ie
 PHONE: 01-4199500
 FAX: 01-4500669
 ADDRESS: The Dealer,
 Irish Farmers Journal, Irish Farm
 Centre, Bluebell Dublin 12

Trouble over Grange results

Results from trials carried out at the Teagasc research centre in Grange on the performance of steers housed on various types of rubber slat mats promise to be controversial

when released in the coming weeks.

In what was a unique move, researchers looked at the performance of animals housed on the three competing products available on the market — Easyfix, Durapak and Mayo Mats.

Preliminary results presented to farmers at the Grange open day last May showed significant variation in the level of liveweight gain achieved across the three different types of mats.

The Durapak mat came out on top, delivering an increase

in liveweight gain worth €45 to €55 per head.

With such strong competition in the marketplace, there is no doubt that the final results of the performance trials will be analysed closely when published shortly.

ALL-IRELAND LADIES' football final

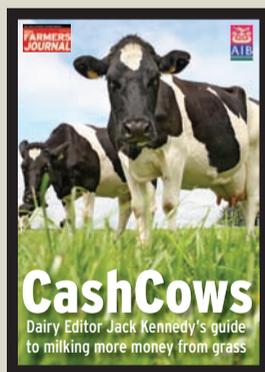


I expect that farmers in Louth and Monaghan will have a keen eye on Sunday's ladies' football All-Ireland final, with Louth-based REPS adviser Edel Byrne lining out for her native Monaghan against Cork.

Kennedy DVD an online hit

IRISH Farmers Journal dairy editor Jack Kennedy recently produced a DVD entitled 'Cash cows', with detailed management information for making money from grass-based milk production. To whet appetites, an eight-minute promo was placed on the farmersjournal.ie website two weeks ago and I see that it has already been viewed 1,500 times.

The DVD, produced with sponsorship from AIB, will be available for €25 at the Farmers Journal stand.



'Cash cows', a DVD produced by IFJ dairy editor, Jack Kennedy.

NRA attitude to generating interest

THE Dealer has noted that the NRA seems to have a different attitude to interest payments, depending on whether they are paying out or receiving.

The toll charge for unregistered cars under the new barrier-free M50 system is €3. If not paid by 8pm the following day, this doubles to €6, an effective interest rate of 18,250% per annum. After 14 days, €40 is ladled on, followed by €100 after 56 days.

Nice work if you can get it. While the exact penalty rate is complex to calculate, it's Al Pacino territory.

Compare this to the interest payable to farmers on land compulsorily purchased. Interest is paid from six months after the date of entry onto the site, at the rate applicable on that entry date.

This rate is set twice a year, in May and November, and currently is 3.5%.

The interest is not compounded, and the rate is fixed, no matter how many years the process takes. This situation persists until agreement is reached and contracts are exchanged. Thirty days after contact exchange, punitive interest kicks in. Now, considering the M50 rates, you probably expect 'punitive interest' to be set at 5,000% or so. It's actually 11%, and that's per annum, not per day.

Furthermore, farmers wryly admit that actually getting this penalty interest is never easy.

The NRA usually comes looking for some vital documentation, such as a marriage certificate, thus stopping the clock.

BRIEF CASES

British calves shot after export closure

I HEAR that there has been a fresh boost in sales of 'bolt guns' for humane slaughter of dairy bull calves in Britain recently. This follows last month's decision by Dutch importers to 'voluntarily' cease buying calves in Britain after TB infection was found in some animals that had been imported from south west England to a veal production unit in the Netherlands.

Calls for an official ban on exports of cattle from Britain were rejected by the EU Commission — but the 'voluntary' action seems to have had much the same effect as a full scale ban.

Consumer Association promotes imports

LIDL and Aldi must be delighted that Ann Fitzgerald of the National Consumer Agency (NCA) continues to provide them with free publicity. Unfortunately, regular surveys from the NCA fail to recognise the fact that SuperValu, Tesco, Superquinn and Dunnes stock a considerable range of quality assured Irish product, while Aldi and Lidl stock very little meat or dairy products of Irish origin.

For the sake of Irish food producers, the NCA needs to go beyond the soundbyte of telling consumers that own label imports are the cheapest products on the market. Fresh, quality assured and traceable must count for something too.

ESB to roll on BIO

I HEAR that the ESB is to convert its fleet of vehicles to biofuels. Details of the development are to be announced later this week in Limerick. The biofuel project is to be a joint venture with the University of Limerick.

Celebs in Ploughing shoot-out

THERE should be plenty craic at the National Dairy Council (NDC) stand at next week's Ploughing. With the support of the Football Association of Ireland they are running a celebrity soccer shoot out to raise funds for Concern.

Personalities from RTÉ and the Guild of Agricultural Journalists are among those taking part at 2pm daily during the National Ploughing Championships.

RTE's Damien O'Reilly will MC for the event. On Tuesday 23 September, celebrities taking part include: Richie Power (Kilkenny), Derek Mooney (RTÉ), Nikki Hayes (RTÉ) and Joe Canning (Galway). Wednesday participants include Ray Houghton (ex-Irish soccer international), Ryan Tubridy (RTÉ), Jackie Cahill (ICMSA President) and Malcolm Thompson (ICSA president). On Thursday, included are Marc O'Se (Kerry), Con Murphy (RTÉ) and Anna Marie McHugh (National Ploughing Association).

Dipping into the NIMBY culture

THE NIMBY culture is alive and well all over Ireland. One recent example to come to attention was in Donegal, where a farmer has been prevented by court order from using his diptub.

The tub in question was part of an integrated handling unit constructed in 2001. Planning was not sought as advice was conveyed that the size of the structure did not require permission. Following an objection from a neighbour, the farmers, Patrick and Louise Gallagher of Manorcunningham, sought and received retention for the unit.

In 2004, following a further complaint about the smell of dip at the site, the Gallaghers were prosecuted for using the tub, which it was claimed was not granted planning permission. The case was finally heard in July, and was lost. It is currently being appealed.

Meanwhile, the Gallagher flock began to suffer from the ill-effects of not being dipped, namely blowfly-strike and maggots. Initially, they were informed that they could not bring a mobile dip tub to the handling unit. Eventually, having contacted the gardai, the RSPCA and the local papers, they were allowed to dip, using a mobile tub onsite.

Patrick Gallagher says he has always used a non-OP dip, and that the mobile tub had to be located closer to his neighbour than the offending tub. Hopefully, sanity will prevail, and an accommodation will be reached.

O'Rourke put forward for EU seat

I SEE that Pat O'Rourke has been nominated by Longford Fianna Fáil to go forward as a candidate for the party's ticket for next year's European Parliament elections in the newly re-shaped north west

region. The former ICMSA president and marketing manager of the Concrete Federation of Ireland will now put his name forward at the convention to be held later this year.