

CORK FARMERS UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL IN THEIR HOLSTEIN FRIESIAN COWS USING EORNAGOLD FROM SPECIALIST NUTRITION

Tom Buttimer and his son Alan are farming in Knockvale Farm, Lyre, Clonakilty, Co. Cork. To fill their winter contract with their local Co-Op they are milking a split calving herd of 110 high yielding Holstein Friesian cows. Over the last number of years, the challenge for the Buttimers has been to make the most of their farm output from a limited grazing platform. Due to their high stocking rates, the Buttimers need to buffer feed at certain times throughout the grazing season. Alan explains 'with the type of cow we have here and the limited grazing area, our focus is to keep the diet right for these cows to reach their potential. We need to achieve this in a way that allows us to cost effectively get more milk from the same number of cows.'

In late 2015, Tom and Alan started to work with Pat Coakley from Specialist Nutrition to help unlock their cow's potential. In particular Eornagold was introduced into their cow's diet and by doing so increased the milk output coming from their farm. With the same cow numbers, they have been able to increase their average yield from 2015 to 2016 by nearly 20%, while maintaining milk solid levels. 'By focusing on the overall nutrition of the cows throughout the season we can really see the response the cows have given us' says Alan.



Unlocking Animal Potential

The Buttimers needed to ensure that they could sustainability increase milk volumes, while maintaining their cow numbers. Working with Pat Coakley from Specialist Nutrition they recognised there was an opportunity to finetune their feeding programme in order to get more from their existing herd. With this in mind, in the autumn of 2015 they began to use a combination of Eornagold, maize silage, treated grain and soya, while altering the mix depending on grass growth rates to ensure sufficient daily dry matter intake levels. As a result of this in 2016, the cows were on average producing 9,217kgs of milk, giving 645kg of milk solids per cow. This represented a 1,700kgs increase of milk from the 2015 figure and a 17% increase in milk solids.

Eornagold, a by-product from the alcohol industry, is used as a buffer feed at certain times of the year to balance the cows protein. Pat Coakley from Specialist Nutrition explained 'Eornagold is high in protein, with 28% crude protein, and is also a good source of energy. It has the added advantage of being a very palatable feed which binds well with other ingredients in a TMR mix, resulting in reduced sorting at the feed face.'

'We find that when we start feeding Eornagold it increases the cow's intake and they respond with more output' Alan added. The Buttimers introduce Eornagold at the shoulders of the year and the winter months when they are buffer feeding at high levels. Pat explained further 'Eornagold included at these key times of the year increases the energy density of the diet to maintain yield and build condition for stale cows. While the fresh calvers in the autumn have improved intake levels needed for a productive early lactation period.'

In addition, last year Tom and Alan started to use Maizecool additive on their maize silage.

AUTUMN BUFFER FEED AT 13kg DM Intake

Maize silage	25kg
Eornagold	5kg
Dairy 16% nut	2kg
Treated Grain	1.2kg
Soya	1.0kg
Straw, Wheat	0.5kg
Yeast and minerals	0.25kg

According to Pat 'as the Buttimers feed maize throughout the year; it is susceptible to yeast and mould growths, which leads to heating in the pit face. Maizecool contains a range of unique bacteria that produce a number of powerful antimicrobial compounds which inhibits yeast & mould growth.' An enzyme package is also included in order to breakdown the fibre structure; which increases the overall digestibility and energy availability from maize silage. Alan added 'particularly during the summer this year, the maize pit stayed cool and stable so that we could close the pit for a period of time and open it again without any waste.'





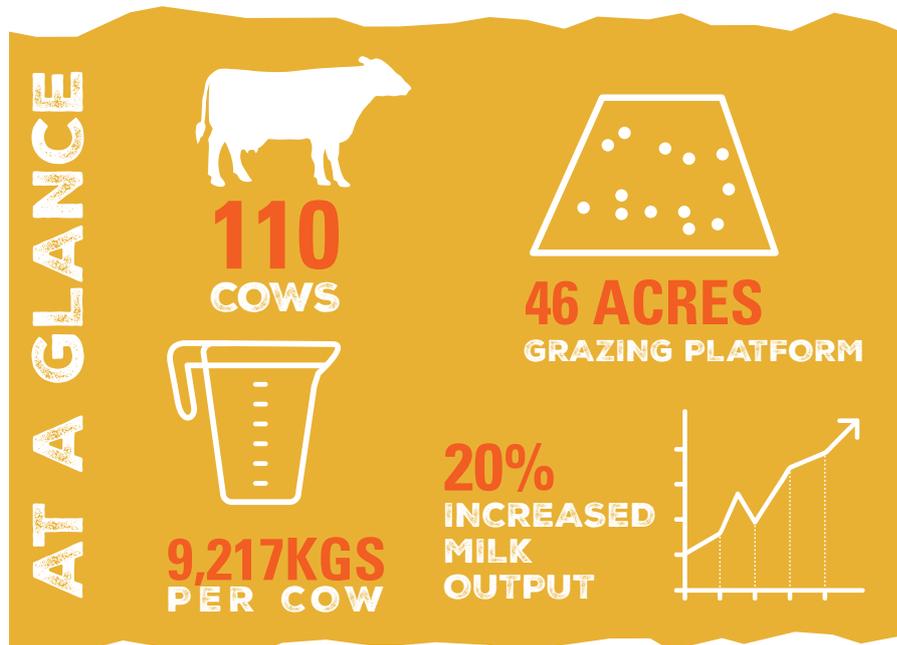
Unlocking Land Potential

One of the key challenges facing the Buttimers in their ambition to unlock their farm potential was the limited grazing platform available to them. While they have a total land base of 172 acres, much of this land is inaccessible for dairy cows due to roads and a river close by. With a high stocking rate of 2.4 cows per acre on their grazing platform, Tom and Alan had to seek out alternative feeding solutions in order to optimise their grassland management approach.

Keen not to overgraze their available grassland, particularly in the wet winter period, the Buttimers worked with Specialist Nutrition to introduce Eornagold into their buffer feed at key times of the year. Alan explained "Grazing land is a limited but important resource for us. We're very careful not to poach land during wet spells especially at the shoulders of the grazing season, as this would affect grass regrowth. Introducing Eornagold at key times of the year has allowed us to carefully manage our grassland".

In addition, land away from the home farm is used to grow maize and silage, along with rearing replacement heifers and calves. Speaking about his maize land Alan explained 'We grow about 34 acres of maize which we use during the winter months and as part of the buffer feed throughout the year.'

This balance of buffer feeding at key time periods and using home grown maize has provided Alan and Tom with an excellent approach to managing their grassland appropriately in order to unlock the long-term potential of their grazing land.



Unlocking Farmer Potential

In order for Tom and Alan to reach their true farm potential and increase their profitability, they needed to unlock the full potential that existed within their cows and land. With the advice they received from Specialist Nutrition, along with introducing Eornagold into their animal's diet, they've been able to achieve this. While pitting Eornagold has given them peace of mind in knowing that they have a reliable source of feed. All while driving their farm profits in a sustainable way.

Alan concluded "Working with Specialist Nutrition and using Eornagold has meant we've been able to make progress and we're getting closer to reaching the full potential of our farm. This feels like a job well done".