

Milk recording for 2022

A new year brings with it new opportunities, and a chance to improve a farms overall performance. One thing a farmer can do to improve performance is by carrying out regular milk recording. Milk recording can have huge benefits on farm for several reasons.

These include:

- In herds where SCC has become an issue, milk recording helps identify those cows in the herd that are contributing the most to elevated SCC levels. In turn the farmer can then put a plan in place to treat (in consultation with their veterinary practitioner), or in severe cases, cull the offending cows.
- By identifying high SCC cows in a herd and taking appropriate action, this puts the herd in a better position to reduce antibiotic use into the future. Selective dry cow therapy is one such way to reduce antibiotic usage and in turn reduces incidences of antimicrobial resistance.
- Milk recording leads to more informed breeding decisions – it is a good tool to identify the high-performing animals in a herd.
- While most farmers are aware of the higher milk volume animals in their herds, those animals may not always be the animals providing the highest milk value. By measuring the fat and protein content for individual cows, this allows the identification of the most profitable animals in the herd.

Nine-point guide to help start milk recording in 2022

1) Before carrying out the first recording on your farm it is vitally important to have cow identification well set up. Freeze-branding cows is the fool-proof method of identification and this should be done well in advance of the first milk recording as it takes 4-6 weeks for the numbers to become visible.

2) In parlours with Auto-ID make sure tags or pedometers are reading correctly and also registered correctly on the computerised system.

3) Does your parlour have jars or meters? Or is it a direct pipeline parlour?
No matter what is in your parlour milk recording can still be carried out, but the equipment required may change, therefore, contact with Progressive Genetics milk recording team prior to first recording is recommended.

4) Make sure all equipment is clean before sampling (i.e. jars, jar taps & sampling bottles).

5) Are the meters in your parlour ICAR approved? If not it may be recommended to use the eDIY meters instead. Talk to Progressive Genetics milk recording team on this.

6) Good records – recording calving dates, dry-off dates & mastitis incidence is extremely important to have accurate milk recording data.

7) Your herd needs to be on the ICBF database, all reports are uploaded to this and available for viewing on your ICBF page.

8) Contact the milk recording team at Progressive Genetics well in advance of carrying out the first recording.

Ideally spring calving herds should record within 60 days of the start of calving. This is important as SCC levels in the first 60 days after calving are an indication of how successful the dry period was.

9) If going down the eDIY route have help available for the days you are recording, milking will take longer on these days so be prepared for it. It is also possible to have a recorder accompany the eDIY meters and do this work for you, this is something worth considering.

Most importantly, when milk recording, is to use the information that is subsequently generated.

If you start milk recording for the first time in 2022 and would like some help and guidance on interpreting the reports please contact the Lakeland/Teagasc Joint Programme team and we will be happy to help.

To get started Milk Recording contact Progressive Genetics milk recording team on (046) 954 0606.

