

GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START

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Hopefully the year has gotten off to a good start for you, after the challenging cold spell at least. It is great to see the early signs of Spring peeping through as well as a bit more daylight.

I am not one for New Year's resolutions, but the new year is a good time to take stock of how the previous year went and ideally how I would like the new year to go. Here are some suggestions which might help your farm year run more smoothly and efficiently:

1. Review records from last year, to assess how the year went and identify any opportunities where improvements could be made, be it financial records, milk records or animal health records and if it is that your records are a bit scarce or disorganised, for the new year, put a system in place which will allow you to record information more easily.
2. Make a plan and break it up into short, medium and long term tasks. Making a herd health plan with your vet if you haven't done so already should be a priority. Most of you are probably doing this already and maybe it's a case of fine tuning the plan. It should include planning for the calving season, having protocols in place for colostrum feeding, having a refresher on calf rearing practices, how to manage sick calves, sick cows etc. and do it for each month so it will make it easier to see what needs to be done in advance. If you are planning on investing in farm buildings, maybe a new calf shed or some more cubicles, now is a good time to plan for this too.
3. Milk recording- the number of farmers milk recording has increased over the last few years which is great to see. Booking an early milk recording, within 60 days of calving, is so important to see how your dry period has gone and to identify any new infections early in lactation.
4. Have you serviced your milking machine recently or do your liners need to be changed? If they haven't been used in a while or if they have done more than 2000 milkings since they were last changed, they will need to be and make a note in your diary of when they need to be changed next.
5. Begin to gather information on what sires are available for the breeding season. The sires you select have a huge effect on the future of your herd and sire catalogues take a while to work through. Get advice from your breeding advisor on how to interpret all the information available.

Finally, don't forget to plan some time off. It helps to have a break booked, to have it to look forward to, especially as we approach the busy time.