ANIMAL HEALTH IRELAND

To contribute to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable farming and agri-food sector through improved animal health and welfare

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Press release
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Animal Health Ireland (AHI) announces CellCheck awards for 2025

500 farm families to recognised for efforts

500 dairy farm families will be recognised at the annual CellCheck Milking for Quality Awards, coordinated by Animal Health Ireland (AHI), on 27th November for their commitment to herd health excellent.

The awards, which are sponsored by FBD and are in their 12th year, recognise the excellence achieved by Irish dairy farmers in herd health, specifically those that achieve a consistently low somatic cell count (SCC). The award-winning farmers will be recognised at a ceremony on 27th November.

Guests of honour at this year's events are Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Martin Heydon TD and CEO of Coole Swan Mary Sadlier. Ms Sadlier will give insights into how she forged her career and why Irish dairy is central to the global Coole Swan success story.

The CellCheck programme, coordinated by (AHI), works with dairy farmers, co-ops, vets and all of industry, to increase the awareness and capacity to manage and prevent mastitis in Irish herds. The programme seeks to achieve a healthier and more productive herd, which contributes to increased efficiency and profitability on farms.

Since the inception of the CellCheck Programme, the national average bulk tank SCC has reduced by almost 100,000 cells/mL, to an average of 173,000 cells/mL in 2024. This improvement in udder health in the national herd is helping to reduce antimicrobial usage, improve farm profitability and contribute towards reducing agri-emissions.

Commenting on the awards, **James Lynch, Chair of Animal Health Ireland**, said: *"Every day a dairy farmer puts on their wellies and steps into the parlour, they are putting years and generations of hard work, skill and strategic decisions into action. The CellCheck Awards recognises and pays tribute to this commitment to excellence. Our dairy farmers are world-class food producers and the CellCheck programme has, for over 10 years, supported them on the journey of improved herd health, reduced SCC, and the continued application of selective dry cow therapy. We look forward to welcoming our award-winning farmers to the CellCheck Awards on 27th November. I greatly thank all our co-ops for their continued support of the CellCheck Programme and I pay tribute to FBD for their unwavering commitment to AHI and CellCheck."*

CellCheck Programme Manager Finola McCoy said: *"This year's award recipients exemplify how excellence in dairy farming begins with getting the fundamentals right. Their commitment to herd health and maintaining exceptionally low somatic cell counts highlights what can be achieved through good management practice and attention to detail. Encouragingly, this group has also shown continued progress in reducing the use of antibiotic dry cow therapy, as selective dry cow strategies become more widely adopted. Our CellCheck award winners are raising the bar for the entire dairy sector, with all of this year's honourees achieving somatic cell count levels below 71,000 cells/mL — an outstanding result.*

Michael Berkery, Chair of FBD Trust, said: *"As a world-class dairy producing national, herd health is the cornerstone of everything we do. Animal Health Ireland plays a vital role in delivering improvements to the Irish livestock sector. The work of the CellCheck programme is evident in improving the quality of Irish milk, whilst also*

boosting savings for farmers. FBD is delighted to sponsor the CellCheck Milking For Quality Awards, and has committed to doing so for the next number of years."

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