THE HERD IS READY TO KICK INTO GEAR FOR 2015

Milking 85 spring calving cows outside Thurles Co. Tipperary, SleepEasi customer Sean Hayes has spent the last few years preparing his herd for post 2015. His ideal cow is one with a balance of fertility and production that produces a calf every year for him. His herd is currently made up of over 70% first and second calvers with an EBI rating at the end of 2013 of €118 versus the national average of €121, 2012 born heifer calves have an EBI of €144 with the 2013 heifers up to €180. Last year, milk production was 6,600 litres delivered with 499kg of solids. Stocking rate on the farms stands at 2.8LU/HA, rising to over 3LU/HA when looking at the grazing platform alone.

Talking about why he signed up to the SleepEasi programme Sean said; "I remember getting a SMS about SleepEasi, a new collaboration between Dairygold and Keenan back in 2012 and texted back my interest. Colman Purcell from Dairygold and Cathal Bohane from Keenan came out to visit me, and explained what SleepEasi was all about. I liked the fact that with it, Colman would take full control of the nutrition and management of the cow and that Keenan's PACE® Connect box would allow Colman to remotely update diets from conversations with me."

With SleepEasi, all farmers are using the same small range of specialist concentrates, but the quantity fed is based on the individual analysis of the farmers' silages and other feeds and with regard to the farmers production goals. It is managed through PACE® Connect, which gives feedback daily to both Dairygold and Keenan's inTouch centre.

"For me, PACE" Connect is superb. I can base my simple buffer diet of silage, concentrate and straw on the weather and grass availability. It's just a matter of adjusting the cow numbers as the diets are pre-programmed remotely onto the box for me. I operate with a high stocking rate on heavy land so the buffer can change on a day-to-day

basis. Adjustment needs to be easy and with this system, it really is!"

"An additional benefit I have seen is the improvement in fertility. In the past, we might have managed to get 66% of heifers back in calf, now with my SleepEasi heifer rearing programme it is over 90%. We focus on the target nutritional requirement and deliver that via grass intake and supplementary feeding. The animal gets her target nutrition each day regardless of the weather or ground conditions.

As a result of the targeted nutritional approach, the condition of the cows is much better too and I have less calving issues. In the past, I would just feed the dry cows silage and scatter the

minerals and nuts on top. But with the controlled energy diet, problems like milk fever and retained placenta are almost non-existent."

"Overall, the SleepEasi programme has helped level out the milk curve; there is less fluctuation because of grass availability, I simply adjust the buffer. Fat and protein are improving, and I think the herd is in a better position and ready to kick into gear for 2015. I might even expand a little more and push the stocking rate up to 3.4LU/HA. I believe that there is no point in getting high production levels if you can't keep the cows in the herd - with SleepEasi my cow survival rates and replacement management are both excellent."

FARM FACTS

Cow numbers	85
% of herd - 1st & 2nd calvers	70%
Herd EBI	€118
Stocking rate (LU/HA)	2.8
Milk solids	499kg
Concentrate fed 2013/cow (typically 0.8 to 1.0T but increased due to	1.2T weather issues 2013
Soil type	Heavy

