

TEAGASC PHD WALSH SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

“Pasture-based systems to create more sustainable replacement heifer rearing systems which promote health and welfare”

Walsh Scholarship Ref Number 2024008

Background

Transitioning pre-weaned dairy calves from a milk-based diet to a pasture based diet is critical for their future growth and development. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recently recommended calves be fed milk at a rate of 20% of bodyweight for the first weeks of life (7-8 L/calf/day), a practice only 14% of Irish dairy farmers are currently undertaking. However, higher milk-feeding rates should not be undertaken to the detriment of rumen development and economic sustainability. In recent years, there has been an increase in farmers reporting diarrhoea issues when freshly weaned calves are turned out to pasture. This suggests that pre-weaning, weaning and post-weaning management protocols for Irish dairy calves need to be re-evaluated to cater for changes in pre-weaning management practices over the past years and to ensure a trajectory which maximises growth, health and welfare. The objectives of this project are to investigate the effect of pre- and post-weaning diet and their interaction on calf growth, health and welfare, behaviour and rumen development. This project has the potential to deliver real solutions to smoothly transition calves from the pre- to post-weaning period ensuring optimum growth rates and high standards of health and welfare within the herd.

Requirements

Applicants should have or expect to have an MSc in an appropriate discipline (Agricultural Science, Veterinary Medicine or another related discipline). The successful candidate should be highly self-motivated and enthusiastic. The PhD Scholarship is a joint research project between Teagasc Moorepark, Co. Cork, Ireland and the Animal Production Systems group, Wageningen University, the Netherlands. The student will be primarily based at Teagasc Moorepark and registered at Wageningen University, for a 4-year PhD degree programme. This graduate programme enables the PhD student to develop into an independent researcher at the highest international level. The student will work under the supervision of Dr. Emer Kennedy (Teagasc) and Dr. Eddie Bokkers and Dr. Laura Webb (Wageningen University). Initially the PhD scholar is appointed for a period of 18 months. Continuation for another 30 months will be based on performance evaluation. A minimum level of competency in English is required. Please click [here](#) with regard to English language requirements.

Award

The scholarship funding is €25,000 per annum plus a contribution to fees up to a maximum of €6,000 per annum (total scholarship funding is €31,000) and is tenable for 4 years. The scholarship will commence in September 2024.

Application Procedure

Applicants should submit a CV, including the contact details of at least two referees, and covering letter detailing their motivation, qualifications, experience and to Emer Kennedy emer.kennedy@teagasc.ie

Closing date 21st June 2024