

18 - 20 MONTH BULL BEEF

(DAIRY CALF TO BEEF)

1. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

- Production of young bulls from spring born Holstein-Friesian calves which are slaughtered at 19 months of age.
- The system includes a period of low cost weight gain at grass in the second grazing season before intensive indoor finishing.
- Bulls on this system are not eligible for the Quality Payment Scheme (QPS).
- Producers need to discuss with their processors that they intend to produce over 16 month bulls as market options may be limited.

2. TYPICAL LIVEWEIGHTS AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF PRODUCTION

STAGE OF PRODUCTION	LIVEWEIGHT (KG)	AVERAGE DAILY GAIN (KG/DAY)
Weaned Calf Weight	100	0.70
Housing (1st winter)	230	0.70
Turnout	330	0.85
Housing (mid-summer)	430	1.25
Slaughter	600	1.65
Carcase Weight (kg)	300-330	

3. MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- This system suits earlier born Holstein Friesian bull calves that are at least 100 kg liveweight when weaned at 10 weeks of age.
- Excellent grassland management while calves are grazing is necessary if the housing weight of 230 kg is to be achieved. A proper parasite control programme needs to be in place throughout the grazing season. Meal feeding to calves at grass is confined to a small amount at turnout and in the autumn (1 kg per day).
- Weanlings are fed on high quality silage (72DMD +) over the winter and 1.5 to 2.0 kg meal per day. Where lower quality silage is fed, higher meal feeding levels will be required to achieve the 0.85 kg per day daily gain necessary.
- Yearlings are turned out to grass early (end February / early March) for 80 – 90 days grazing. Excellent grassland management with bulls is necessary to meet the 430 kg housing weight.
- Bulls are housed in late May / early June and fed on *ad-lib* concentrates for 80 to 100 days.
- Good housing facilities are required with adequate lying space, clean drinking water and good ventilation.
- A good herd health programme is required for this intensive system.
- As animals will be rehoused during the summer months in this system good housing facilities will be required with adequate lying space, clean drinking water and good ventilation.

4. INPUTS REQUIRED

Concentrates	1.31t DM or 1.5t fresh weight
Grazed Grass	1.5t DM
Silage	0.6t DM or 3.0t fresh weight
Stocking Rate	3.4 animals/ha at 170kg organic N per ha

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5. ECONOMICS

		€
a. Weaned Calf Purchase Value	100 kg	
b. Carcase Value	320 kg	
c. Sales – Purchases (B – A)		
Variable Costs per Head*		
Grass	1.5t DM	€60
Concentrates	1.5 tonnes	
Silage	3.0 tonnes	€90
Veterinary	-	€35
Transport & Levies	-	€40
d. Total Variable Costs		
Gross Margin per Head (C – D) **		

* Variable costs per head do not include interest or mortality costs.

** Subtract estimated fixed costs per head to calculate net margin per head.

6. MARKET CONSIDERATIONS

- As outlined, producers undertaking this system should do so in consultation with a meat plant, and with a clear understanding of the desired carcase specifications.
- Young bulls should achieve a minimum fat class of “2+”. If a carcase is not sufficiently finished, the beef cuts look less appealing and eating quality is reduced. Poorly fleshed young bulls are more likely to produce dark-cutting beef.
- Strongest demand being for animals of conformation “O=” or better.
- Care should be taken in loading and transporting young bulls. To prevent stress, animals should be kept in their peer groups and slaughtered without delay.

7. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- These bulls will be classified as over age and will not qualify for the QPS. All producers are advised to discuss their intention to finish older bulls in advance with their processor as marketing these animals may be difficult when cattle supplies are high.
- This is a high cost system and the gross margins achieved per head are very sensitive to calf purchase price, concentrate price and beef selling price.
- Later spring born bulls are not suited to this system as they will be too light when housed for the final finishing period requiring a much longer *ad-lib* concentrate feeding stage.
- Managing bulls at grass for the second grazing season requires excellent management skills. In poor weather conditions the length of the second grazing season will be reduced considerably resulting in a significant increase in feed costs.
- This system has animals finishing in the autumn period when traditionally numbers of beef animals for slaughter are at their highest. This may reduce the finishing price available.
- Bulls can be aggressive animals and need careful handling and management. If yearling bulls are to be grazed, fields should to be properly fenced.