

# 19 MONTH EARLY MATURING HEIFER BEEF (DAIRY CALF TO BEEF)

## 1. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

- Spring born Angus or Hereford heifers bred from dairy cows and finished off grass at 19 months of age.
- Typically born in the second half of the calving season and slaughtered from September to November.
- Heifers on this system are eligible for the Quality Payment Scheme (QPS) provided they are quality assured and fall within the correct conformation and fat classes on the grid.

## 2. TYPICAL LIVEWEIGHTS AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF PRODUCTION

STAGE OF PRODUCTION	LIVEWEIGHT (KG)	AVERAGE DAILY GAIN (KG/DAY)
Weaned Calf Weight	90	0.70
Housing (1st winter)	200	0.70
Turnout	260	0.50
Slaughter	460	0.90
Carcase Weight (kg)	230 - 250	

## 3. MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- To achieve a lifetime daily gain of 0.72 kg the calf rearing stage is critically important to ensure the heifer is well grown and healthy when weaned off milk.
- Weanling heifers for this system are on average 200 kg at housing in the autumn. This requires excellent grassland management, a proper parasite control programme and a small amount of meal feeding at turnout and in the autumn (1.0 kg per day).
- Weanlings are introduced to 1.0 - 2.0 kg of concentrates and good quality silage (72%DMD or better) over the first winter. The target is to achieve a modest weight gain of around 0.5kg/day or 60 kg over the first winter.
- Yearling heifers are turned out in early spring to achieve 200 kg over a 220 day grazing season. 3.0 kg of concentrate is fed per day for a seven week period before slaughter.
- Grazing management in the second season at grass must be excellent and will require a rotational grazing system ensuring an adequate supply of leafy grass is available at all times.

## 4. INPUTS REQUIRED

Concentrates	0.4t DM or 0.45t fresh weight
Grazed Grass	2.3t DM
Silage	0.6t DM or 3.0t fresh weight
Stocking Rate	3.2 animals/ha at 170kg organic N per ha

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## 5. ECONOMICS

		€
a. Weaned Calf Purchase Value	90 kg	
b. Carcase Value	235 kg	
c. Sales – Purchases (B – A)		
Variable Costs per Head*		
Grass	2.3t DM	€92
Concentrates	0.45 tonnes	
Silage	3.0 tonnes	€90
Veterinary	-	€30
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

- Finished heifers usually attract the highest QPS base-price at slaughter because they tend to meet the desired specifications for most customers, in terms of age, carcass weight, conformation etc.
- In addition to the export meat plants, the Irish butcher / wholesale trade often represents a strong market for heifers.
- When finishing heifers, producers should keep a keen eye on fat cover. The ideal carcass fat class for most customers is from a “3” to a “4-”.
- Strongest demand being for animals of conformation “O=” or better.
- Excess fat makes the beef less visually appealing and results in a loss in meat yield and higher labour costs on account of trimming.
- A number of processing companies operate breed-specific schemes which reward producers with a price premium on Angus and Hereford sired animals which meet the qualifying criteria.
- It is advisable to pre-book Angus and Hereford cattle in advance to maximise the premiums payable.

## 7. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Heifers on this system are highly desirable as they will be slaughtered at a young age, a light carcass weight and are suitable for a number of beef producer schemes that currently offer price bonuses at certain times of the year.
- It is important that heifers on this regime achieve the target carcass weight of 235 kg as lighter carcasses may be more difficult to market.
- Early maturing calves can often attract a premium price in the market and beef farmers purchasing these types of calves need to calculate carefully what they can afford to pay.
- Potentially heifers are being marketed in autumn when supplies of finished cattle are at their highest which may impact on the finished beef price.