



**AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

The Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority

# Improving Suckler Herd Fertility Targets to Increase Profit

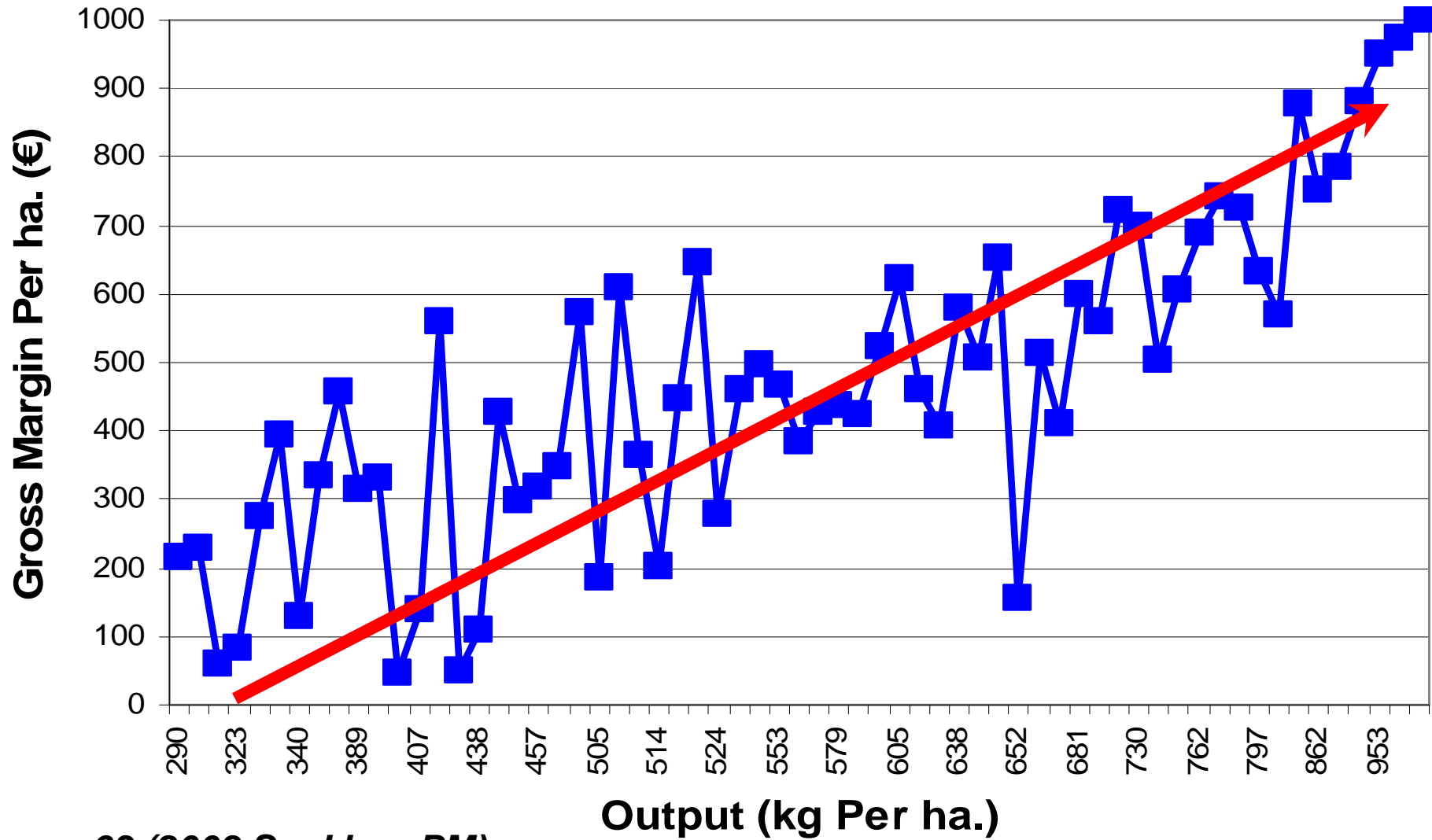


## PROFITABLE SUCKLING EVENT

Kilkenny, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2012

Pearse Kelly, Teagasc

# Output (kg LW) vs. Gross Margin (€) per ha.



*n = 63 (2008 Suckler ePM)*

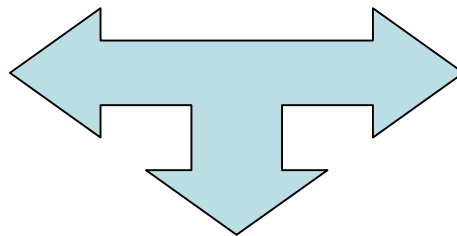
# Output per ha. (kg) on Suckler Farms

(1) Stocking Rate (1.0 – 1.5 – 2.0 – 2.5) LU/Ha

(2) Output per LU.

- Liveweight gain per LU farmed
- Suckler cow fertility

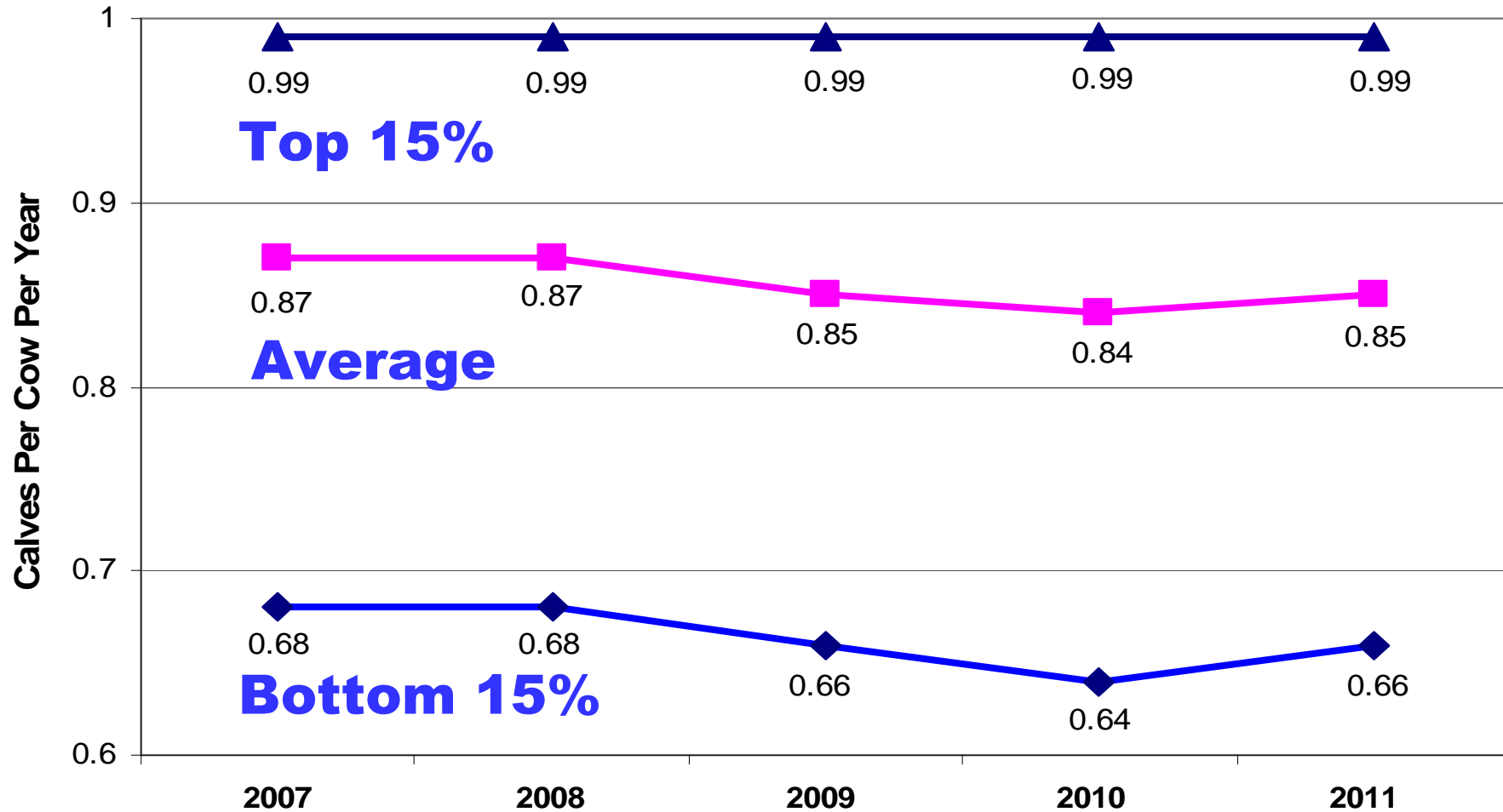
**Calving  
Interval**



**Calving  
Spread**

**Calves per Cow  
per Year**

# Calves / Cow / Year Trend



# Calving Interval vs. Kg Produced

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	Calving Interval	Kg LW / LU
<b>Bottom 15%</b>	411 days	265 kg
<b>Top 15%</b>	357 days	316 kg

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- n = 63 Suckler Farms
- Ranked by Calving Interval (July '07 to June '08)
- Kg LW / LU from 2008 ePM

# Calving Interval vs. Calves / Cow / Yr.

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## Calving Interval

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**Bottom 15%**                      411 days

**Top 15%**                              357 days

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- n = 63 Suckler Farms
- Ranked by Calving Interval (July '07 to June '08)

# Calving Interval vs. Calves / Cow / Yr.

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	Calving Interval	Calves/Cow/Yr.
<b>Bottom 15%</b>	411 days	0.75
<b>Top 15%</b>	357 days	0.98

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- n = 63 Suckler Farms
- Ranked by Calving Interval (July '07 to June '08)



# Calving Spread

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## Calving in a 12 month Period

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4 Months or less	16%
5 to 8 Months	62%
9 to 12 Months	22%

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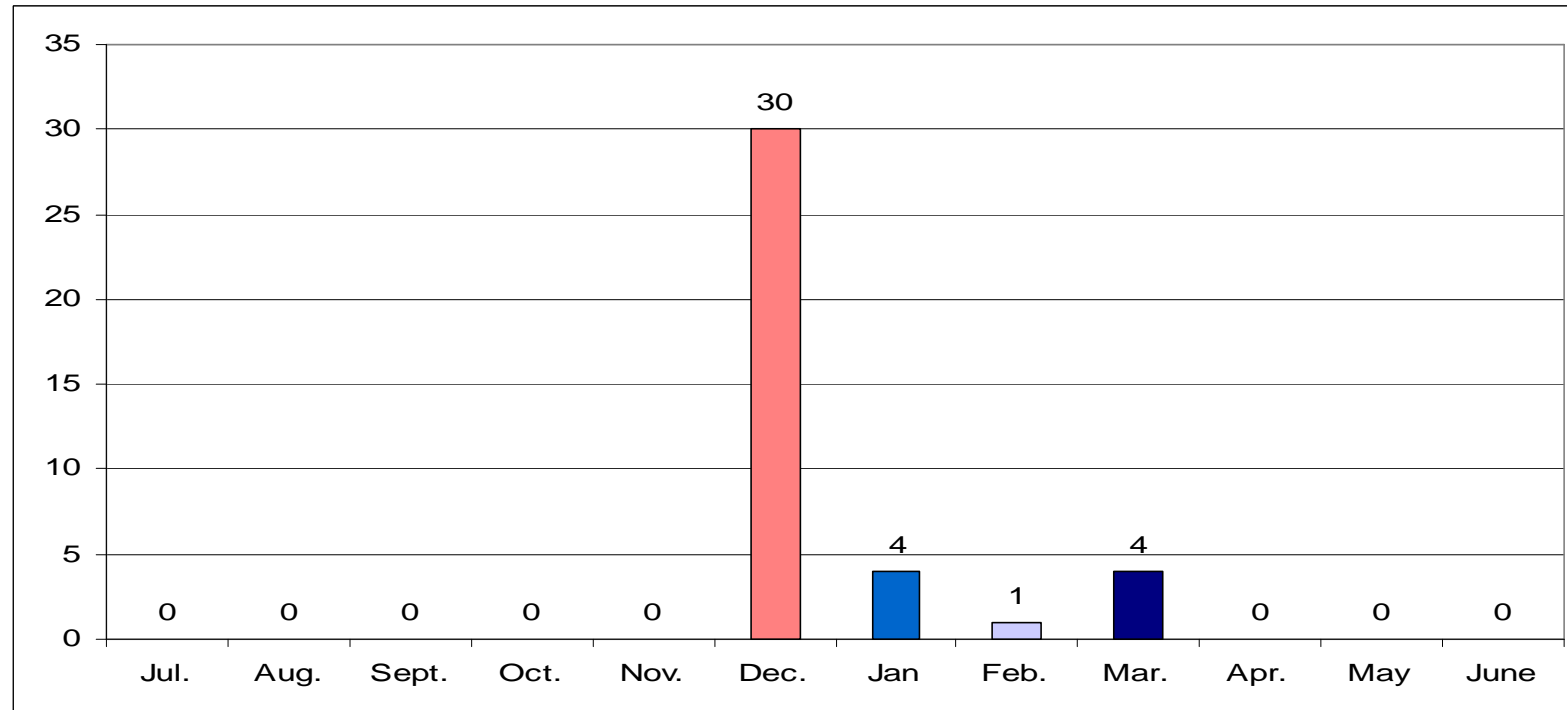
**n = 63 Suckler Farms, Calving July '07 to June '08**

# Calving Spread vs. Output

	Calving Spread	Kg LW / LU	Gross Output/ LU (€)
Top 16%	4 Months or Less	360 Kg	€619
Other 84%	5 to 12 Months	299 Kg	€539
Difference	-	61 Kg	€80

- n = 63 Suckler Farms
- Kg LW / LU & Gross Output per LU from 2008 ePM

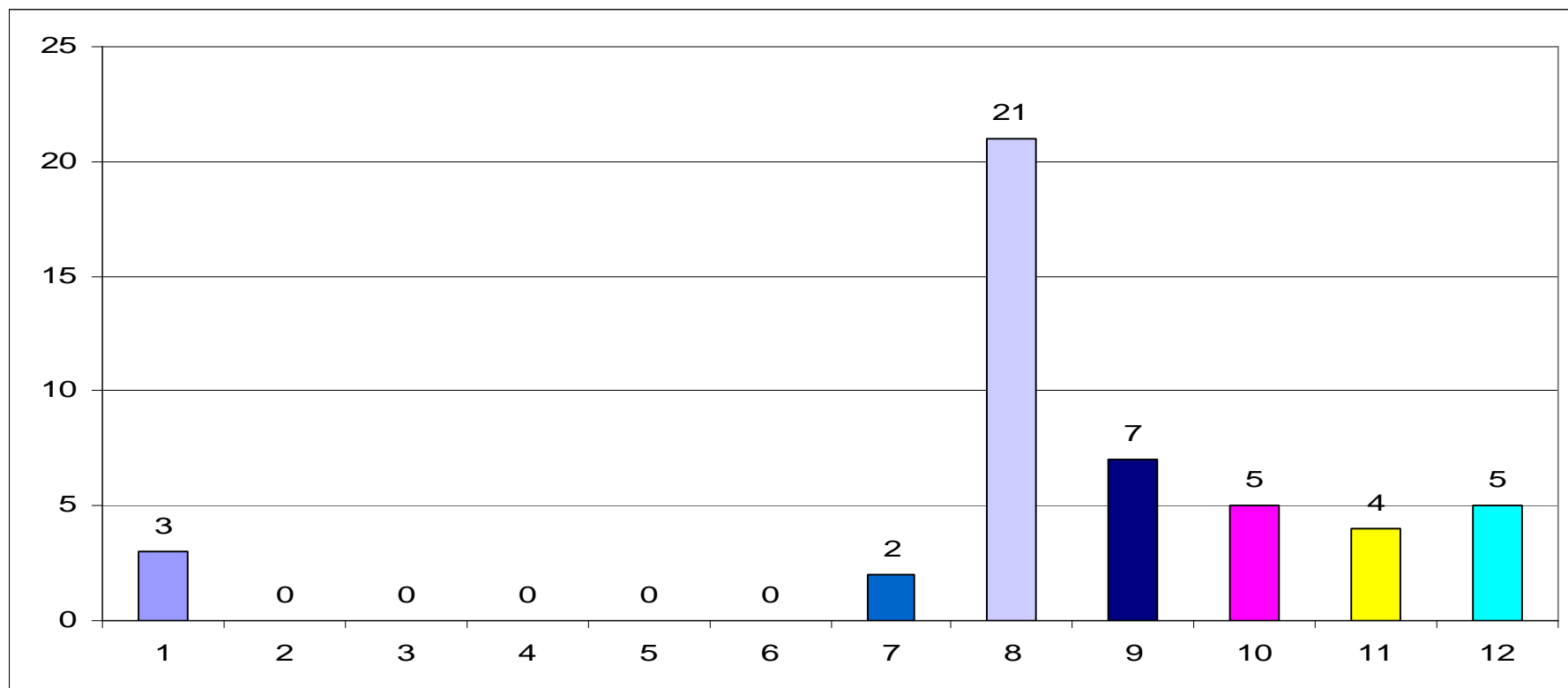
# Discussion Group Member 1



**Calving Interval = 366 days**  
**Calves/ Cow / Year = 1.00**

**Output / LU (kg) = 362 kg**  
**Gross Output / LU = €583**

# Discussion Group Member 2



**Calving Interval = 390 days**

**Calves/ Cow / Year = 0.75**

**Output / LU (kg) = 207 kg - 155 kg**

**Gross Output / LU = €351 - €232**

# Fertility Targets for Suckler Herds

- One calving season
- 365 days average calving interval
- Less than 2.5% mortality at birth
- Less than 5.0% mortality at 28 days
- 60% of cows calved in first month
- 80% calved in first two months
- All calved within 12 weeks
- 0.95 Calves per cow per year

**Critical  
First Step**

**Join up to**

**ICBF**  
**HerdPlus**<sup>®</sup>  
Profit through Science

# Three Valuable HerdPlus Reports

**HerdPlus**  
Profit through Science

LoCall 1850 600 900

**Beef Calving Statistics**  
(01/07/2010 --- 30/06/2011)

Herd Owner:  
Herd Number:  
Page:

**Animal Details**

**1. Summary Data**

Report is based on beef cows  
(Embryo births excluded)

Total Calving Interval:  
Number of Calves:

**Animal Details**

Jumbo: 124  
Official Tag: IE211264050124  
Animal Name:  
Date of Birth: 19/04/2000  
Breed: CH (43.75%), SI (37.5%), UN (18.75%)

Herdbook Score:  
Weighed:  
BLUP Index (Reliability 19%)  
MUSCLE 86

BLUP Index (Reliability 19%)	DOCILITY
MUSCLE 86	DOCILITY 103

Calving Survey	Calving Interval	Sex	Current Status	Sire	Breed
350	M	Dead	40238	CH	
273	F	Dead	60273	CH	
380	M	In herd	60273	CH	
415	F	Dead	60273	CH	
338	F	Dead	70524	CH	
359	F	Sold	10459	CH	
393	F	In herd			
354	M	In herd			

**4. Females**

Number of females expressed as a proportion of all eligible females in the herd

**5. Calves per cow**

Number of calves expressed as a proportion of all eligible females in the herd

**6. Births with known calving interval**

Number of births with a known calving interval (40) expressed as a proportion of all calving intervals recorded during the period

**7. Births with calving interval**

Number of births with calving interval as a proportion of all calving intervals recorded during the period

**8. % of Heifers calved 22-26 months of age**

The number of heifers calved in the period (7) that were between 22 and 26 months of age (1)

**Explanatory Notes**

1. Eligible Females: All females on the farm that are greater than or equal to 22 months.

2. Calves per cow per year: 365/calving interval x no. of live calves at 28 days / eligible females

\* Birthweight of 40kgs is assumed and is subtracted from the Weaning Weight when calculating the Calving Interval. If an animal is Linear Scored then this value is printed instead of the Sire's Linear Score.

\*\*Docility - If animal is Linear Scored then this value is printed instead of the Sire's Linear Score.

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**HerdPlus**  
Profit through Science

LoCall 1850 600 900

**Report Print Date**  
-- (08-NOV-2011) --

Herd Owner: JOHN EYRE  
Herd Number: IE2112640  
Page: 1(9)

**Beef Calving Report - Section A**

Cows calved more than once (ordered by last Calving Interval)

Jumbo	Animal Number	Breed	Age	No of Calvings	Age at First Calving (mths)	Last Calving	Avg. Calv Interval	Last Calv Interval
						11-Oct-10	476	575
319	IE211264010319	CH	5y 9m	3	34	01-Feb-11	468	407
308	IE211264050308	CHX	4y 10m	2	32	29-Dec-10	369	429
149	IE211262560149	LM	10y 8m	8	31	19-Nov-10	379	405
108	IE341085910108	CHX	5y 8m	3	25	14-Jun-10	382	389
193	IE211358110193	CHX	7y 8m	5	35	03-Dec-10	380	388
281	IE211083790281	LM	4y 11m	2	32	20-Dec-10	384	384
404	IE211264040404	CH	4y 7m	2	38	08-Feb-11	381	380
192	IE381142630192	CHX	7y 1m	4	33	02-Dec-10	385	376
403	IE211264030403	CH	4y 9m	2	33	17-Feb-11	389	375
391	IE211341250391	SI	7y 8m	5	32	28-Feb-11	368	374
206	IE211219070206	LMX	5y 8m	6	33	28-Nov-10	350	374
189	IE211264040189	CHX	10y 11m	8	34	12-Nov-10	385	373
147A	IE211264030147	CHX	5y 9m	4	32	20-Feb-11	385	369
308A	IE211342930308	LMX	7y 7m	5	33	21-Mar-11	381	368
346	IE211096480346	LMX	5y 8m	3	32	08-Jan-11	381	368
361	IE211264030361	CHX	5y 8m	3	32	11-Nov-10	421	354
1050	IE211373331050	SIX	5y 8m	3	33	05-Nov-10	371	354
147	IE211401150147	CHX	10y 9m	7	33	12-Feb-11	355	354
124	IE211264050124	CHX	11y 8m	8	34	02-Dec-10	355	354
458	IE371004380458	SIX	4y 8m	2				

\* No of Calvings: Embryo calves are not included.  
\*\*Animal Flushed: Calving Interval Figures may be inaccurate.



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Development Authority

# One Calving Season

- More focus at calving & breeding
- Less chance of calving interval increasing substantially
- Reduced workload in the year due to calving cows – more cows calved per day
- Improved grassland management – less groups grazing separately, one breeding season
- Less duplication of tasks\_ dosing, vaccination, meal feeding, weaning, selling etc.

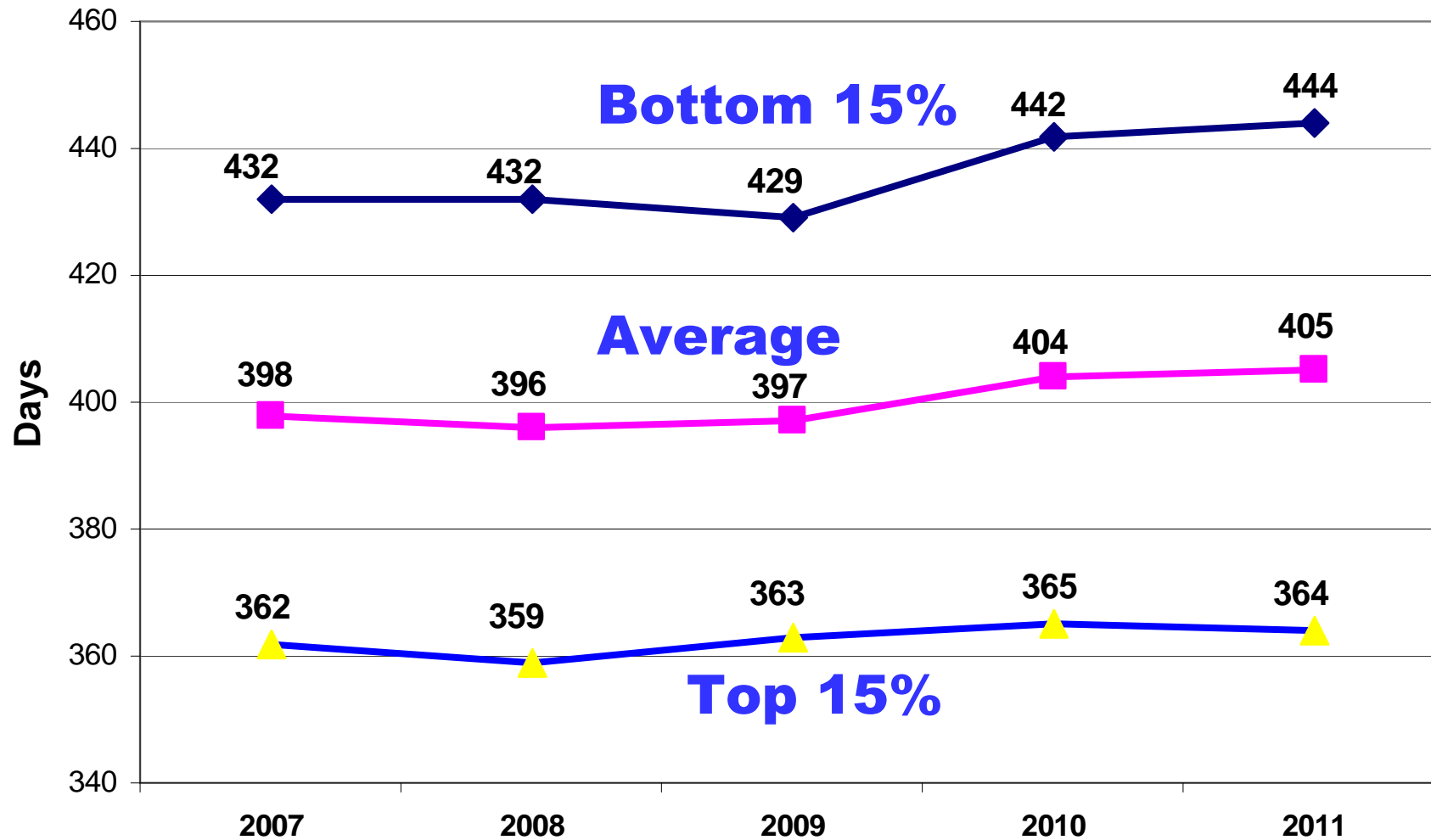
# Calving Interval

**Target = 365 days**

- Every day empty over 365 days cost to system
- Target **is** possible with good management
- Persistent Offenders are often the problem  
([Check you suckler Cow Report](#))
- Cull values currently good
- Predominantly crossbred herds



# Calving Interval Trend



# Effect of Poor Calving Interval

Cow 1		Cow 2	
C.I. 367 Days		C.I. 444 Days	
D.O.B	Calf Wt (Kg)	D.O.B	Calf Wt (Kg)
01/02/2004	324	01/02/2004	324
02/02/2005	322	20/04/2005	245
04/02/2006	320	08/07/2006	166
06/02/2007	318	25/09/2007	87
08/02/2008	316	01/11/2008	No calf
<b>Output</b>	<b>1600kg</b> (5 calves)	<b>Output</b>	<b>822kg</b> (4 calves)



**Separation of  
calves from  
cows daily  
promotes  
faster returns  
to heat**

# Calving Spread

**Bulling Season**

**- 11 wks Cows**

**- 6wks Heifers**

## Why Reduce Calving Spread?

- Reduced labour & less disease
- Improved focus on fertility
- Less groups of stock o the farm
- More Marketing Options
- Higher Output (more kgs weaned)

# Effect of Prolonged Calving Spread

Date	Age @ Weaning(Days)	Wt @ Weaning
1 <sup>st</sup> Feb – 22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb	245	310kgs
22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb–15 <sup>th</sup> Mar	224	280kgs
15 <sup>th</sup> Mar-5 <sup>th</sup> April	203	260kgs
5 <sup>th</sup> April-26 <sup>th</sup> April	182	240kgs
26 <sup>th</sup> April-17 <sup>th</sup> May	161	217kgs

**93kgs**

- 1.1kgs ADG to Weaning
- 40kgs Birthweight

# How Valuable is your Late Born Calf?

310 Kg x €2.50 / Kg



€775

217 kg @

€775



€3.58 / Kg

# Targeting a Tighter Calving Pattern

**(1) Choose target calving date** – Depends on the market being aimed for e.g. live export trade?, two year beef?, bull beef?

**(2) Have a bigger herd size for 1 -2 years** - allows for greater numbers to be culled without affecting output

**(3) Delay the start of the breeding season** – tighten up early calvers – very fertile

**(4) Get late cows cycling earlier** – From day 30 after calving use either restricted suckling or PRID/CIDR



# Targeting a Tighter Calving Pattern

## (5) Use Heifers

- Increase replacement rate for two years e.g. 25% per year
- Consider breeding them two weeks earlier than main bunch

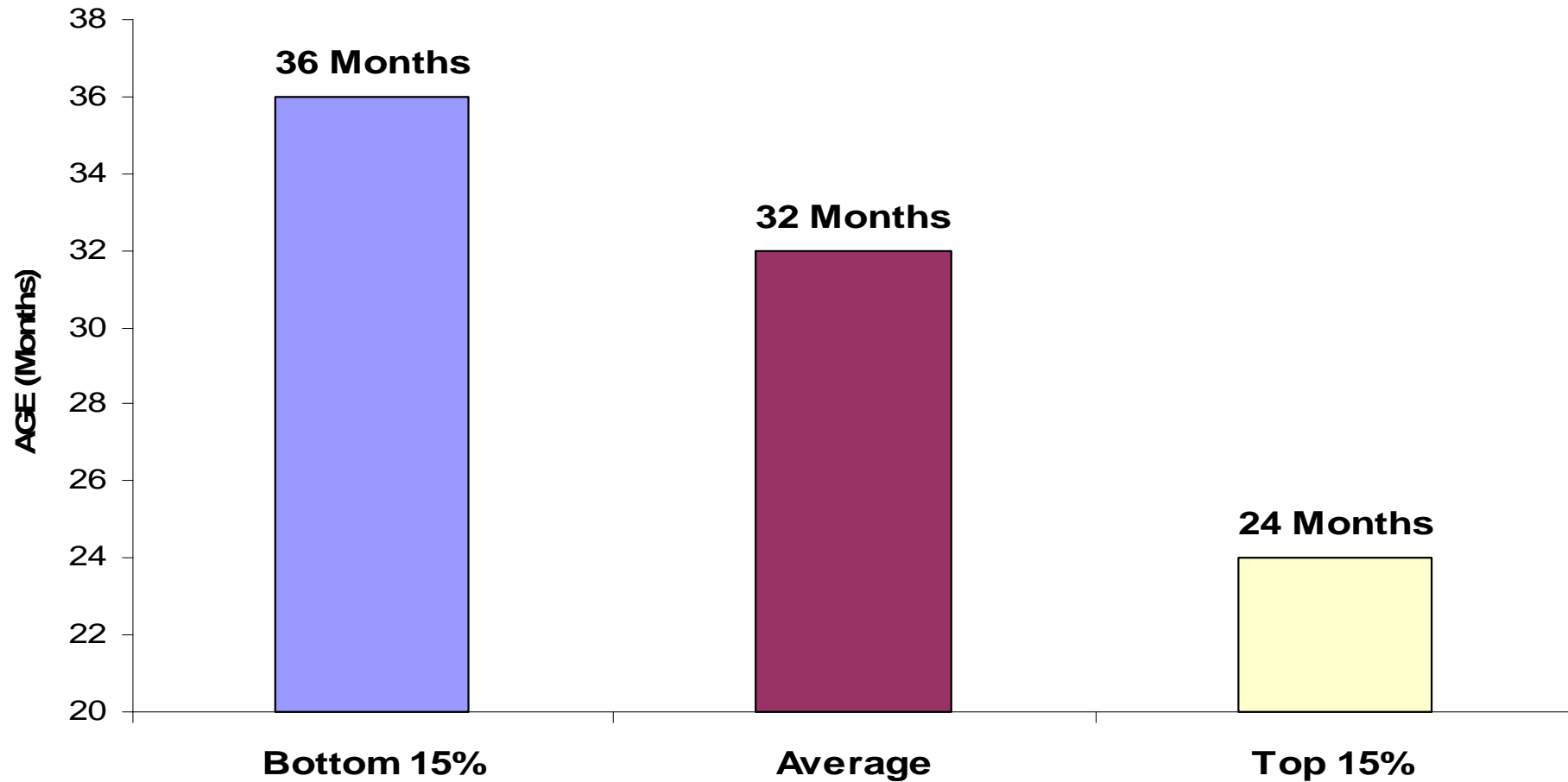
## (6) Pull the Bull Earlier

- Remove 3 to 4 weeks earlier each year
- In three years – saving = 10 weeks

**Aim must be to be at the target calving period  
within three years**



# Age at First Calving



# Take Home Messages

- Suckler Herd Fertility is directly linked to profit or lack of it
- Focus on the Key Fertility Targets
  - Calving Interval
  - Calving Spread
  - Calves per Cow per Year
  - Mortality
- Join HerdPlus to get you own figures

*Thank You*