

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.