

20 MONTH STEER BEEF

(SUCKLER BRED)

1. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

- Production of continental steers from the suckler herd which are slaughtered at 20 months of age before a second winter period.
- Steers go through a modest store period over the first winter gaining around 0.6kg/day before being turned out to grass in early spring. Steers are then rehoused in September for an indoor feeding period of 6-8 weeks before being slaughtered in November.
- Alternatively steers could be fed concentrate at grass for the final 6-8 weeks and slaughtered directly off grass.
- Steers 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)
Weaning (Start Weight)	320	1.33
Turnout	400	0.60
Housing (2nd winter)	540	0.90
Slaughter Weight	590	0.95
Carcase Weight (kg)	310-330	

3. MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- Weanlings for this system are on average 320kg at weaning in the autumn.
- Animals will need to achieve a lifetime gain of just over 0.9kg/day from birth to slaughter to achieve the targets specified.
- Weanlings are introduced to 1-2 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 0.6kg/day or 80 kg over the first winter.
- Steers are turned out in early spring to achieve a 200 day grazing season and a gain of around 185kg over there second season at grass. This requires good grazing management.
- From housing to slaughter the steers will be on a diet of high quality silage and an average of 5kg/day of concentrate.
- In an integrated suckler to beef system a compact calving pattern would be desirable.

4. INPUTS REQUIRED

Concentrates	0.5t DM or 0.58 t fresh weight
Grass	2.2t DM
Silage	1.1t DM or 5.5t fresh weight
Stocking Rate	3.9 animals/ha at 170kg organic N per ha

20 MONTH STEER BEEF

(SUCKLER BRED)

5. ECONOMICS

		€
a. Weaned Calf Purchase Value	320 kg	
b. Carcase Value	320 kg	
c. Sales – Purchases (B – A)		
Variable Costs per Head*		
Grass	2.2 tDM	€88
Concentrates	0.58 tonnes	
Silage	5.5 tonnes	€165
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

- Steer beef is seen as being of equivalent quality to heifer beef across many of our markets.
- Steer and heifer beef are the ideal preference for the major UK customers, and similarly across continental Europe these are a point of differentiation, or selling point, against young bull beef, which is widely available and competitively priced.

7. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The system depends on high quality grass silage being available of at least 70%+ DMD. If silage quality falls below this, higher concentrate levels will be required at both the weaning and finishing phases.
- Steers will be marketed in the Autumn where finished cattle supplies are high, therefore potentially impacting on the potential finishing price the market returns.
- Steers are being finished at a relatively young age so it is important that continental bred steers have adequate fat cover.
- This system allows extra cows to be carried in a suckler system because of the earlier age of slaughter of the steers.
- Steers that fall short of the above targets could be marketed as forward stores before the second winter.