

23 MONTH EARLY MATURING STEER BEEF (DAIRY CALF TO BEEF)

1. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

- Spring born Angus or Hereford steers bred from dairy cows and finished at 23 months.
- Typically born in the second half of the calving season and slaughtered from February to April.
- 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)
Weaned Calf Weight	90	0.70
Housing (1st winter)	230	0.85
Turnout	310	0.60
Housing (2nd winter)	510	0.85
Slaughter	610	0.95
Carcase Weight (kg)	310 - 330	

3. MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- To achieve a lifetime daily gain of 0.81 kg the calf rearing stage is critically important to ensure the bull calf is well grown and healthy when weaned off milk.
- Weanling steers for this system are on average 230 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 0.6kg/day or 80 kg over the first winter.
- Yearling steers are turned out in early spring to achieve 200 kg over a 220 day grazing season. To achieve this, 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.
- 100 kg of liveweight has to be put on in the final finishing period. To achieve this high quality silage and 5 kg of concentrate are fed. Lower quality silage will require extra meal feeding.

4. INPUTS REQUIRED

Concentrates	0.7t DM or 0.80t fresh weight
Grazed Grass	2.2t DM
Silage	1.2t DM or 6.0t fresh weight
Stocking Rate	2.4 animals/ha at 170kg organic N per ha

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5. ECONOMICS

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a. Weaned Calf Purchase Value	90 kg	
b. Carcase Value	320 kg	
c. Sales – Purchases (B – A)		
Variable Costs per Head*		
Grass	2.2t DM	€88
Concentrates	0.80 tonnes	
Silage	6.0 tonnes	€180
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.
- Strongest demand being for animals of conformation “O=” or better.
- 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

- Steers on this system are highly desirable as they will be slaughtered at a young age, a light carcase weight and are suitable for a number of beef producer schemes that currently offer price bonuses at certain times of the year.
- 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.
- Grazing management in the first and second grazing season needs to be excellent as does the quality of silage fed to weanlings and finishing steers. Otherwise the concentrate feeding levels need to increase reducing the margins achievable.