

# 24 MONTH HEIFER BEEF (SUCKLER)

## 1. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

- On this system continental heifers are slaughtered at 24 months of age.
- Heifers are housed for their second winter at 530 kg and will be put on a diet of good quality silage (72%+DMD) and 4.0 to 4.5kg of concentrates to finish.
- 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)
Weaning (Start Weight)	290	1.20
Turnout	370	0.60
Housing (2nd winter)	530	0.80
Slaughter Weight	625	0.85
Carcase Weight (kg)	320-340	

## 3. MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- Heifers selected for this system will have performed well pre weaning achieving 1.20kg/day from birth.
- Animals will need to achieve a lifetime gain of around 0.80kg/day from birth to slaughter.
- On suckler farms finishing their own heifers the system is best suited where the herd is achieving a compact calving over a 10-12 week period.
- Heifers are given 1.0 to 1.5kg of concentrates and good quality silage over their 1st winter to achieve a weight gain of 0.5-0.6kg/day.
- The system also requires high DMD silage of 72%DMD or better for the indoor finishing period.

## 4. INPUTS REQUIRED

Concentrates	0.6t DM or 0.7t fresh weight
Grazed Grass	1.9t DM
Silage	1.5t DM or 7.5t fresh weight
Stocking Rate	2.7 animals/ha at 170kg organic N per ha

# 24 MONTH HEIFER BEEF (SUCKLER)

## 5. ECONOMICS

		€
a. Weaned Calf Purchase Value	290 kg	
b. Carcase Value	340 kg	
c. Sales – Purchases (B – A)		
Variable Costs per Head*		
Grass	1.9 tDM	€76
Concentrates	0.7 tonnes	
Silage	7.5 tonnes	€225
Veterinary	-	€30
Transport & Levies	-	€35
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, carcase 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-”.
- Excess fat makes the beef less visually appealing and results in a loss in meat yield.
- Strongest demand is for animals of 270kg carcase weight upwards.

## 7. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Heifers on this system are highly desirable as they will be slaughtered at a young age, have an optimal carcase weight for a number of markets and are typically R and U grade.
- It is important that heifers on this regime achieve the targeted weight gain of 80kg over the first winter.
- Good grassland management and early turnout in spring is critical to achieving good weight gain at grass.
- Good quality silage is a key part in this system to minimise the level of concentrates fed during the finishing period.
- Heifers on this system are being marketed in the spring months out of the shed when demand is generally good.
- It is important to ensure heifers are monitored so that they do not become over fat.