

24 MONTH STEER BEEF (SUCKLER)

1. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

- Production of spring born continental steers from the suckler herd which are slaughtered at 24 months of age.
- Steers go through a modest store period over the first winter gaining around 0.6kg/day before being turned out to grass for their second grazing year. After housing for the second winter steers are placed on a diet of grass silage and concentrates up to finish.
- 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)	585	0.90
Slaughter Weight	700	0.95
Carcase Weight (kg)	360-400	

3. MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- Continental weanlings for this system are on average 320kg at weaning in the autumn.
- Animals will need to achieve a lifetime gain of around 0.90kg/day from birth to slaughter to achieve the targets specified.
- 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 0.60kg/day or 80 kg over the 1st winter.
- Steers are turned out in early spring to achieve a 200 day grazing season and a total weight gain of around 185kg over their second season at grass.
- From housing to slaughter the steers will be on a diet of high quality silage and an average of 5kg/day of concentrate. They will be slaughtered at 700kg liveweight or 395kg carcass.
- Good grazing management will be required to ensure animals achieve good weight gain over their second grazing system.
- In an integrated suckler to beef system a compact calving pattern would be desirable.

4. INPUTS REQUIRED

Concentrates	0.75t DM or 0.87t fresh weight
Grass	2.2t DM
Silage	1.6t DM or 8t fresh weight
Stocking Rate	2.7 animals/ha at 170kg organic N per ha

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5. ECONOMICS

		€
a. Weaned Calf Purchase Value	320 kg	
b. Carcase Value	395 kg	
c. Sales – Purchases (B – A)		
Variable Costs per Head*		
Grass	2.2 tDM	€88
Concentrates	0.87 tonnes	
Silage	8 tonnes	€240
Veterinary	-	€39
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 is for animals of up to approximately 400 kg carcass weight, which will produce steak cuts of the preferred size for most customers.

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 phase.
- Good weight gains over the first winter (80kg) are essential to maintain the targets outlined otherwise the finishing period may be prolonged.
- Where silage quality is not adequate producers may opt to feed concentrates *ad-lib* for the final 80-100 days. This will increase the amount of concentrates used and feed costs.
- It is important to slaughter animals as they become fit so that they are not allowed to become over fat.
- Animals are marketed in the spring months when generally demand for steers is good.