

26 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 26 months of age off grass in their third grazing season.
- Typically born in the second half of the calving season and slaughtered from May to July.
- 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)	210	0.75
Turnout	280	0.50
Housing (2nd winter)	450	0.75
Turnout	490	0.45
Slaughter	610	1.15
Carcase Weight (kg)	300-320	

3. MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- This system of steer beef is based on feeding very little concentrates, high quality silage and excellent grassland management.
- A proper parasite control programme at grass especially in the first year is important.
- Weanlings are introduced to 1 kg of concentrates and good quality silage (72%DMD or better) over the first winter.
- No meals are fed at grass in the second grazing season.
- In the second winter steers are fed little or no concentrates to gain 0.40 to 0.45 kg per day on high quality silage.
- At turnout for the third grazing season, steers weigh 490 kg and put on 120 kg over the next 3 to 4 months. This requires excellent grassland management and 4.0 kg concentrate per day for the last 40 days pre-slaughter.

4. INPUTS REQUIRED

Concentrates	0.4t DM or 0.45t fresh weight
Grazed Grass	3.7t DM
Silage	1.4t DM or 7.0t fresh weight
Stocking Rate	1.95 animals/ha at 170kg organic N per ha

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5. ECONOMICS

		€
a. Weaned Calf Purchase Value	90 kg	
b. Carcase Value	320 kg	
c. Sales – Purchases (B – A)		
Variable Costs per Head*		
Grass	3.7t DM	€148
Concentrates	0.45 tonnes	
Silage	7.0 tonnes	€210
Veterinary	-	€40
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 steers of conformation “O=” or better and up to approximately 400 kg carcass weight, which will produce steak cuts of the preferred size for most customers.

7. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Steers on this system are highly desirable as they will be light in carcass weight and are suitable for a number of beef producer schemes that currently offer price bonuses at certain times of the year.
- Care needs to be taken that they do not become over fat in the second grazing season and are slaughtered before this happens.
- 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, second and third 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.