

28 MONTH STEER BEEF

(SUCKLER)

1. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

- Production of steers from the suckler herd which are slaughtered at typically 28-30 months.
- The system is a low input grass/forage based system with a modest level of concentrates over the winter periods.
- Animals are stored over both winters with a third 100-120 day season at grass.
- Steers are eligible for the Quality Payment Scheme (QPS) provided they are slaughtered before they reach 30 months of age, are quality assured and have the correct fat and conformation classes.

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	380	0.45
Housing (2nd winter)	575	0.90
Turnout (3rd season)	630	0.40
Slaughter Weight	760	1.1
Carcase Weight (kg)	380-420	

3. MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- Calves selected for this system should have performed well pre weaning achieving 1.25kg/day or better from birth.
- Animals will need to achieve a lifetime gain of around 0.83kg/day from birth to slaughter.
- Weanlings are housed and wintered on silage and 1.0 kg of concentrate to achieve a modest gain of about 0.45kg/day.
- Yearlings are turned out and grazed for the season and with some compensatory growth the steers gain 195kg.
- At housing for the second winter the steers weigh 575kg and they can be over wintered on grass silage and 1.0 kg of concentrate gaining 55kg.
- At turnout for the third grazing season the steers weigh 630 kg. They are then grazed for 3-4 months before slaughter in mid-summer.
- Some animals may become over fat so regular assessment of fat cover is important so that animals can be slaughtered as they become fit.

4. INPUTS REQUIRED

Grass	4t DM
Concentrates	0.2t DM or 0.23t fresh weight
Silage	2.1t DM or 10.5t fresh weight
Stocking Rate	2.0 animals/ha at 170kg organic N per ha

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5. ECONOMICS

		€
a. Weaned Calf Purchase Value	320 kg	
b. Carcase Value	420 kg	
c. Sales – Purchases (B – A)		
Variable Costs per Head*		
Grass	4.0t DM	€160
Concentrates	0.23 tonnes	
Silage	10.5 tonnes	€315
Veterinary	-	€45
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 steers of up to approximately 400 kg carcass weight, which will produce steak cuts of the preferred size for most customers.
- Since this system is likely to result in some steers achieving heavier carcass weights, it is advisable for producers to discuss this in advance with their intended meat processor.

7. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- This is an extensive, low concentrate input system.
- If silage quality is good enough (70%+ DMD) steers could be overwintered for their second winter without concentrate and the concentrates could be fed at grass in the final 6-8 weeks pre-slaughter.
- In a suckler to beef system this system will reduce the number of cows that can be carried per hectare. It will increase the number of animal groups on the farm and extra housing facilities will be required.
- Animals that are turned out for a third grazing season will have a high rate of compensatory growth and may do considerably better than 1.1kg per day while at grass.
- Animals may be marketed at a time when cattle supplies are normally tight.
- It is important that animals are not allowed to get too heavy or go over 30 months before slaughter.