

UNDER 16 MONTH BULL BEEF (SUCKLER)

1. SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

- Production of young bulls from the suckler herd which are slaughtered before they reach 16 months of age.
- These young bulls are acceptable to customers in the UK market.
- They demonstrate high levels of feed conversion efficiency as part of a high output system.

2. TYPICAL LIVEWEIGHTS AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF PRODUCTION

STAGE OF PRODUCTION	LIVEWEIGHT (KG)	AVERAGE DAILY GAIN (KG/DAY)
Weaning (Start Weight)	320	1.33
Housing	350	1.20
Slaughter	650	1.30
Carcase Weight (kg)	370-400	

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 1.25kg/day from birth to slaughter.
- Animals should be from genetically superior sires that demonstrate high growth potential, good conformation and are easy fleshing to achieve an adequate fat cover by slaughter.
- On suckler farms finishing their own bulls the system is best suited where the herd is achieving a compact calving over a 10-12 week period.
- Calves are introduced to 2-3 kg of concentrates at grass between weaning and housing. Concentrates are built up to average 5kg/day after housing for the 230 day finishing period.
- The system also requires high DMD silage of 72%DMD or better for the indoor feeding period. On average animals will consume approximately 20kg of silage daily on this system.
- A good herd health programme is required for this intensive system as animals cannot afford any setbacks or store period if they are to achieve the targets set out.
- As animals will be housed for 8-9 months in this system good housing facilities will be required with adequate lying space, clean drinking water and good ventilation.

4. INPUTS REQUIRED

Concentrates	1.1t DM or 1.27t fresh weight.
Silage	0.9t DM or 4.5 t fresh weight.
Stocking Rate	8.4 animals/ha at 170kg organic N per ha

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5. ECONOMICS

		€
a. Weaned Calf Purchase Value	320 kg	
b. Carcase Value	365 kg	
c. Sales – Purchases (B – A)		
Variable Costs per Head*		
Grass	-	
Concentrates	1.27 tonnes	
Silage	4.5 tonnes	€135
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

- In order to meet the desired customer specification young bulls must be less than 16 months of age at slaughter.
- Young bulls should achieve a minimum fat class of “2+”. If a carcass is not sufficiently finished, the beef cuts look less appealing and eating quality is reduced. Poorly fleshed young bulls are more likely to produce dark-cutting beef.
- 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.
- Care should be taken in loading and transporting young bulls. To prevent stress, animals should be kept in their peer groups and slaughtered without delay.

7. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- An alternative finishing strategy is also possible where animals initially go through a growing phase after housing for approximately 4 months on 3-5 kg of concentrates/day before being built up on *ad-lib* concentrates for the final 100 days. This may be a viable option when concentrate prices are low or where you are unable to make high DMD silage consistently.
- The high concentrate regime will deliver an average daily gain over the housing period of at least 1.5kg/day. Concentrates consumed will increase to 1.5- 1.6t/head and silage consumption will drop to 2.5t/head. Approximately 150kg of straw will be required during the *ad-lib* concentrate phase.
- It is advisable for producers engaging in under-16 month bull production to discuss it in advance with their intended meat plant. In some processing plants, under-16 month young bulls are paid for on the QPS (Quality Payment System) and are eligible for the in-spec QA bonus once they meet the related criteria.
- Excellent feeding management and achieving sufficient fat cover are key components in achieving performance and profitability in this system.
- Some producers may aim to sell animals that are fit for slaughter at even younger ages.