



# Newford Farm 2020 review

What is the Newford Farm all about?



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**T**he Newford Farm is a suckler calf-to-beef demonstration farm situated in Athenry Co Galway.

The farm was established by Teagasc and Dawn Meats, with the support of the *Irish Farmers Journal* and McDonald's in 2015. The 100-cow suckler calf-to-beef demonstration is being run on 68ha across four blocks.

The Newford herd consists of first-cross Aberdeen Angus and Hereford cows, bred from the dairy herd.

All indications to date are that this breeding policy along with careful ICBF terminal sire selection for high

carcase weights is performing well due to a combination of excellent milk production and cheap liveweight gains in their offspring.

The project is in the final year of its seven-year term. The weather was favourable in 2020 in the west and cows and calves got out to grass in early February.

The midsummer drought which parts of the country experienced during June, did not affect the west and the autumn 2020 was one of the best since the project started, with most of the animals remaining at grass until mid to late October.

## How was breeding season 2020?

The breeding season started on 26 April and lasted for 10 weeks, finishing on 6 July. The herd was run in two groups of 50 cows. The main tools used during the breeding season were two teaser bulls which were fitted with a chin ball harness and all cows were tail painted.

Once-daily AI was used and all cows were inseminated at midday. If a cow was artificially inseminated at 12 noon and was still showing signs of heat that evening, she was artificially inseminated again the next day at the same time. Scanning results showed that 83 cows proved to be in-calf out of 93 cows that were bred. They will start calving from 1 February 2021.

## How did the weanlings perform?

All the 2020 weanlings were weaned from their dams during September and the average weaning date for the 96 weanlings was 12 September. At weaning all weanlings were weighed



and the male weanlings had an average daily gain of 1.39kg from birth to weaning.

Castration of the males took place on 7 July and the heifer weanlings had an average daily gain of 1.31kg from birth to weaning.

Prior to weaning, all the weanlings were creep grazing ahead of the cows and were receiving 1kg of meal and after weaning this was increased to 2kg when the weanlings returned to grass.

#### How does this weight gain compare to previous years?

2020 has been the best year on Newford Farm with regard to weight gain achieved.

As shown in Table 1 the comparison of the weanlings' liveweight gain from birth to weaning over the last six years highlights bulls achieved 0.13kg/head/day and heifers achieved 0.9kg/head/day more than in 2019. Newford herd average weaning per-

**Table 1: Weanling performance birth to weaning 2015-2020**

Year	Weaning date	Average daily gain kg/head/day	ADG heifers
2015	10 Oct est.	1.24	1.15
2016	16 Oct	1.26	1.19
2017	21 Sept	1.30	1.22
2018	4 Oct	1.24	1.18
2019	17 Sept	1.26	1.21
2020	14 Sept	1.39	1.30

centage (%) relative to the cow weight was 55%.

#### Overall, how did the weanlings perform from birth to housing?

All the weanlings were housed on 30 October, we had hoped to keep them at grass until mid-November, but unfortunately the poor wet weather conditions in late October meant they had to be housed. The bull and heifer weanlings achieved 1.28kg/day and 1.23kg/day, respectively, from birth to housing.

#### How did the steers and heifers perform this year?

There were 59 beef heifers and 46 steers on Newford farm to be slaughtered this year and all of these were sired by five-star terminal bulls such as; Fiston, Gamin and Mullary Intrepid, Tow Thorpe Dubai and Elderberry Galahad. The 59 yearling heifers were turned out to grass on 23 March at an average liveweight of 411kg. The first two heifers were sold off grass with no concentrate on 16 July at 17 months of age. They graded U-4 with a kill-out of 54 % and an average carcase weight of 280kg.

Unfortunately, in late July 2020 the Newford Farm had an outbreak of coccidiosis and all the heifers had to be treated. Due to the withdrawal period of the drug used our sales date was delayed until early October. On 6 October, 26 heifers were drafted for slaughter with an average liveweight of 563kg at 19.5 months of age. These heifers were 197 days at grass before slaughter and achieved 0.67kg/day with no concentrates being provided.

These 26 in-spec heifers graded R=3, with an average carcase weight of 288kg and a 51 % kill-out. The factory base price on the day was €3.70 and all of the 26 in-spec heifers qualified for the extra 20 c/kg through the Quality Assurance Scheme. The average sale price was €1,127.

The remaining heifers received concentrate at grass from 4 September and were housed on 27 October. From housing these heifers were getting 5kg of 16 % coarse beef ration along with good-quality (75 % DMD) ad-lib silage. The remaining heifers were

**Table 2: Heifers and steers average sales performance 2020**

	Heifer sales	Steer sales
Conformation score	R = 3 -	R = 3 -
Fat score	299	350
Carcase weight (kg)	570	640
Liveweight (kg)	52%	54%
Kill Out %	20	20
Age (mts)	€1,188	€1,389
Value	€3.97	€3.96

drafted for sale as they came fit. One lighter heifer will be sold in January 2021. Table 2 shows the average performance of the heifers slaughtered in 2020.

The steers were turned out to grass on 22 March at an average liveweight of 437kg. They had achieved an average daily gain of 0.75kg over the winter period. The first three steers were sold off grass at 675kg liveweight at 19 months of age with no meal fed.



Fiston heifer calf born on 10 February.

They were 164 days at grass before slaughter on 2 September and graded R = 3 - with a kill-out of 55% and an average carcase weight of 369kg. The remaining 43 steers, received concentrates at grass from 4 September until they were housed on 2 October.

From housing, the steers were offered 6kg of 12% protein coarse ration along with good-quality (75% DMD) silage ad-lib. They achieved an average daily gain of 1.39kg from housing to slaughter. The remaining steers were drafted for sale as they came fit. There are two lighter steers on the farm and they will be sold in January 2021. Table 2 shows the average performance of the steers slaughtered in 2020.

The farm team are pleased with the average steer carcase weight of 350kg given the average age of slaughter was just 20 months. The farm is focused on achieving the best balance between outputs and finishing costs and at present there is no benefit in feeding additional concentrates to hit higher carcase weights.

The farm is making the best use of grass and this will help to reduce Newford Farm's environmental footprint.