FINISHING THE WEANED SUCKLER CALF

Suckled calf production is the only viable cattle option on many farms in the hills and uplands, and forms an important complementary enterprise to hill sheep production in these areas. The majority of herds either calve in the spring (February to April) or in the autumn (September to November). Whichever system is selected the winter represents an expensive period and accounts for up to 70% of the variable costs of the suckler herd. However, winter feed costs can be reduced where forage is maximised and supplements are correctly fed.

SPRING BORN CALVES

- Calves born February to April
- Born mainly inside
- Good hygiene at calving will restrict scouring
- Cows and calves turned out to grass in mid-April
- Graze high quality swards
- Creep feed calves from August (50 kg in total)
- Weaned and housed in November

March born bulls should gain 1.2 kg/day and weigh 330 kg at weaning. Heifers and steers should gain 1.0 kg/day and weigh 290 kg.

Options at yarding
i) Sell store at 8 or 12 months of age
ii) Finish in yards at 13 months
iii) Finish at 18/19 months
- Steers and heifers housed in November and fed good quality silage with small barley supplement (0.5 kg/day) will be turned out to grass in mid-April and weigh approximately 370 kg.
  - Housing weight 290 kg
  - Turn out weight 370 kg
  - Liveweight gain 0.5 kg/day
  - Silage 3.5 tonnes
  - Rolled barley 80 kg

Heifers will finish off grass in August at 480 kg and steers in October at 530 kg.

- Turn out weight 370 kg
- Selling weight 480 - 530 kg
- Liveweight gain 0.8 kg/day

iv) Finish at 22/24 months
- Steers housed at 480 kg will finish inside in February/March on moderate silage (65 D value) plus 2.0 kg mineralised rolled barley.

- Housing weight 480 kg
- Turn out weight 560 kg
- Liveweight gain 0.8 kg/day
- Silage 3.0 tonnes
- Rolled barley 200 kg

Feed Requirements
- 13 m - 3.0 t silage + 530 kg compound
- 18 m - 3.5 t silage + 130 kg barley
- 24 m - 6.5 t silage + 330 kg barley
AUTUMN BORN CALVES

- Calves born September to November
- Born mainly at grass
- Housed in November
- Calves need a separate creep feeding area during the first winter
- Fed good quality silage and small amount palatable compound (up to 2.0 kg/head/day). Calves should eat 0.5 tonnes silage plus 100kg compound

It is beneficial to feed concentrates to the calf rather than extra feed to the cow especially during the later winter months when lactation tends to drop.

Calves can either be weaned at turn out and cows turned to hill-land/rough pasture or turned out with dam and weaned during the summer.

Creep feed calves from August (50 kg in total).
Graze high quality swards until housing in October.

By 12 months of age the heifers should have gained 0.8 kg/day and weigh 350 kg. The steers should have gained at 0.9 kg/day and weigh 370 kg.

Options at yarding
- i) Sell store at 12/13 months of age
- ii) Finish in yards at 18/19 months
- iii) Finish off grass at 22/24 months

- ii) Finish at 18/19 months
Heifers and steers housed in October will finish in April on good quality silage (70 D value) plus 2.0 kg/day (heifers) or 3.0 kg/day (steers) mineralised rolled barley.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Heifers</th>
<th>Steers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing weight</td>
<td>350 kg</td>
<td>370 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling weight</td>
<td>485 kg</td>
<td>530 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liveweight gain</td>
<td>0.75 kg</td>
<td>0.9 kg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Silage</td>
<td>4.0 t</td>
<td>4.5 t</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rolled barley</td>
<td>360 kg</td>
<td>540 kg</td>
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</tbody>
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- iii) Finish at 22/24 months
Steers housed in October and fed moderate quality silage with no supplement will be turned to grass in April.

Housing weight 370 kg
Turn out weight 450 kg
Liveweight gain 0.5 kg/day
Silage 5.0 tonnes
Rolled barley Nil

Steers will finish off grass in August/September.

Turn out weight 450 kg
Selling weight 550 kg
Liveweight gain 0.8 kg/day

**Feed requirement**
18 months - 4.5 t silage + 510 kg barley (heifers)
18 months - 5.0 t silage + 690 kg barley (steers)
24 months - 5.5 t silage + 150 kg barley

MORE INFORMATION

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