

# Heifer and Calf Management Special



## Heifer rearing - Investing in the future herd.

Calf and heifer rearing does not attract the attention it deserves on many farms. However, more farmers are concentrating their efforts into improving performance and efficiency as they view the heifer as the future herd. This becomes more apparent as in recent years the adoption of genetic testing (geonomics) has really highlighted future potential from an early age.

The importance of calving at 2 years is well documented and has the following advantages over an extended first calving age.

- Reduced cost of replacements (per head) and money tied up in the rearing enterprise.
- Greater lifetime milk yields
- Improved fertility and second calving success rates
- Lower capital, labour, and facility requirements
- Lower carbon footprint

As heifer rearing is a cash hungry activity, bringing animals into production earlier will enable a quicker return to be generated.

With all the compelling reasons above how do we achieve 2-year calving? We need to analyse and action the following:

- What is our current overall performance and where possible break this down into the key growing stages of the heifer's life?
- Clearly set out performance targets and a management plan (including health) for the animal to achieve 2-year calving.
- Measure and monitor and review the animal's performance and be prepared to adjust accordingly.

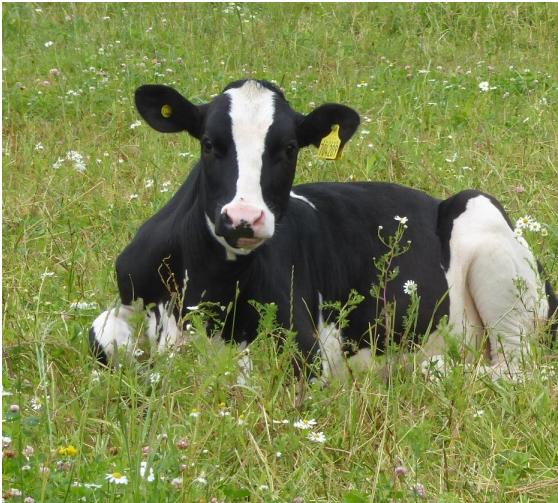
Having taken a closer look at your heifer rearing system and come up with a plan it is important to highlight this to all on the farm – publicise the targets! This is especially important for those involved in key areas such as calf rearing, heifer serving etc. Part of the heifer rearing plan will need to include detailed protocols for management and health planning. It is so important to draw these up with the farm team, make them practical and review them on a six-monthly basis considering the latest farm results.

Part of the review process should assess performance against your targets and other relevant key performance indicators (KPI's)



### The key stages and considerations in a heifer's growth are:

Grow stage	Age	Key consideration
Birth to weaning	0-10 weeks	Best start to life - colostrum management, liquid Milk feeding immunity support
Weaning to bulling	10 weeks – 13 months	Transition through weaning to total dry food diet, continuous DLWG
Service stage	13 – 15 months	Right age, right size, feeding for fertility, targeted breeding management
Pregnancy stage	15 – 23 months	Maintenance of the pregnancy and consistent DLWG
Preparing for lactation	24 months	Move to the transition group, Nutritional and social considerations to prepare for a successful productive life



#### At SC Nutrition, the team can help you:

- Evaluate where you are regarding current heifer rearing performance.
- Develop a bespoke heifer rearing plan (including health plan) to achieve 24-month calving.
- Monitor your heifer rearing enterprise on a regular basis to ensure you remain on target and make any adjustments needed along the way.

### Calf Management

At SC Nutrition Ltd we very much work along the lines of an holistic approach, with every part of the dairy unit needing to be running smoothly in order to have a truly efficient and successful business.

With this in mind SC Nutrition Ltd have started to develop a practical way in monitoring calf management on farm which we then can use as a guide to make the most appropriate nutritional and calf comfort suggestions to help maximise growth rates and health. Putting your calves in good stead to having a successful first 1<sup>st</sup> lactation and long productive life within the milking herd.



If you would like any more information on how to optimise your calf management give Tori a call today on 07500 205974.