Heifer Rearing Checklist

- Good intakes of quality colostrum in the first 24 hours of life are critical to get calves off to a good start.
- Avoid losses due to calf diarrhoea and pneumonia.
- Calves need to have doubled their birth weight by weaning.
- Calves should be eating 1.5kg/head/day of concentrates over 3 consecutive days prior to weaning.
- Calves need to be averaging 0.7-0.8kg/day growth rates (CLWG) to hit the optimum target calving age of between 22-24 months.
- Heifers should be bulled at 60% of their adult weight at 13-15 months of age.
- Ideally all vaccination courses should be completed at least four weeks prior to service.
- Ensure good heat detection, or use synchronisation protocols to get heifers served.
- Feed to maintain growth rates of 0.7-0.8kg up until calving, at a BCS of 2.5-3.0.
- Feed appropriate minerals and trace elements during the rearing process to avoid deficiencies.
- Aim to calve down at 22-24 months of age.
- Monitor:
  - Colostrum intakes – using total protein measurements in newborn calves.
  - Growth rates – using wither heights or a weighband.
  - Medicines Records – how many calves are you having to treat?
  - Age at 1st calving.
Bulling Heifers

Feeding Heifers - Costs of Production

• Calves should have course mix at 19-20%

Aims

• Milk replacer should ideally be high protein rates.

Post Colostrum

• Calves need to have doubled their birth weight by weaning.
• Should be eating 1.5kg/head/day of concentrates over 2 consecutive days (Quigley 2001).
• Beef- at 6½ months when 75% of nutrient requirement is from sources other than milk.

Feeding Heifers

• Beef at 6½ months is from sources other than milk.
• Should be eating 1.5kg/head/day of concentrates over 2 consecutive days (Quigley 2001).
• Beef- at 6½ months when 75% of nutrient requirement is from sources other than milk.

• Calves should have course mix at 19-20% crude protein offered to them from birth; this encourages them to eat hard feed earlier and stimulates better rumen development.

• Heifers should aim to calve between BCS 2.5-3.0. They should be fed concentrates if required when out at grass to ensure adequate growth of 0.7-0.8kg DLWG up until calving and a BCS of 2.5-3.0. (DairyCo).

• At present 15% of heifers do not make it to first calving (Brickell et al 2009).

• Heifers should be on a rising plane of nutrition at service.

• All heifers should be back to a BCS of 2.5-3.0. (DairyCo).

• Assessment of forage quality and abundance of grass to prevent over-conditioned heifers.

• Heifers need a rising plane of nutrition when there is an abundance of grass to prevent over-conditioned heifers.

• Pre-calving minerals are important, know where there are deficiencies prior to calving.

• BCS should be increased prior to service to ensure the best conception rates.

• Culling rates need to be considered. 24% of heifers do not make it to their 2nd calving and a heifer will not start making you any money back before halfway through her second lactation. (Brickell et al 2009).

• Fertility increases up to the 3rd oestrus cycle after puberty therefore we want heifers to have reached puberty and be cycling at least 6 weeks prior to serving.

• Synchronisation can be a useful tool for getting heifers pregnant. Can be used in dairy and beef.

• Heifers need a rising plane of nutrition when there is an abundance of grass to prevent over-conditioned heifers.

• Pre-calving minerals are important, know where there are deficiencies prior to calving.

• BCS should be increased prior to service to ensure the best conception rates.