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ClieNFarms EIP-AGRI Practice Abstracts

Reducing the age at first calving on beef farms

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Reducing the age at first calving of heifers reduces the number of unproductive animals on the farm and thus reduces enteric methane emissions, which represent the main emissions on a beef farm.

In addition, the area freed up by less unproductive animals can increase the forage security of the farm, which is particularly interesting in a context of drought.

To succeed with this early calving, you must be attentive to:

- Adapting the feeding of young animals: having quality fodder and adapted LSU on grazing, but also adapting the intake of concentrates. The key point is to reserve for heifers the best forages and to the regrowth fields during grazing periods. Winter rations should have slightly higher energy densities than for calving at 36 months.
- Monitoring the growth of the heifers: measuring the weight of the animals to reach a sufficient weight for breeding (70 % of adult weight).
- Detecting heat and control reproduction
- In beef system, the reduction of the age can be limited by the single period of calving in many farms.

The classic age of calving at 36 months can only be significantly reduced to 30 months if there are two periods of calving in the farm, with one part of the herd with autumn calving season, and one part with spring calving season. In this case, heifers of 30 months from one system are calving in the other one.

For example, Jalogy Demonstration Farm will reduce the age at first calving by 6 months in 2024. There was until then two herds, on calving in autumn and one calving in spring, heifers of each one calving at 36 months. From 2024 onwards, heifers will calve at 30 months, switching from the autumn system to the spring system and vice versa.



Figure 1 : Beef cows at Jalogy Demonstration Farm.



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