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Climate Neutral Farms

ClieNFarms Practice Abstracts

Reduce and maintain a good calving-to-calving interval in beef production

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The calving-to-calving interval target for suckler herds, to ensure profitability, is one calf per cow per year, regardless of breed. To achieve this, an average calving-to-calving interval close to 365 days must be maintained.

Gaining 15 days on the calving interval for a calf to finish beef farm reduces the unit's net carbon footprint (kg eCO₂/kg of liveweight gain) by 2.2% and increases live meat production by 6 kg lwg/livestock unit (LU). It has also a positive effect on economic results for the farmer.

Use one or more well-defined calving periods, each no longer than 3 months:

- Avoid overlapping breeding with late calvings; remove the bull after 3 months.
- Adjust breeding timing by type of breed.
- Monitor and record females' heats 30 days before breeding starts to ensure cows are cycling.
- When breeding naturally, monitor and record heats and returns to see if the natural bull(s) are successfully breeding the females.

A balanced diet based on pre- and post-calving needs is very important:

- Before calving, ensure cows are in good condition with a complete ration covering vitamins, minerals, energy and protein. On grass, needs are generally met, and no supplementation is necessary unless problems are observed.

- After calving, ensure that the needs of first-calf cows, which are still growing, and cows with outdoor calves, are adequately met. Don't hesitate to allocate multiparous and first-calf cows separately; this will make feeding easier.
- Properly prepare breeding bulls before the breeding season: check their legs, provide a balanced diet, etc.
- Avoid sudden dietary changes one month before and during the breeding to reduce embryo loss.



Figure 1 : Calving interval.



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THIS PROJECT HAS RECEIVED FUNDING FROM
THE EUROPEAN UNION'S HORIZON 2020
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PROGRAMME
UNDER GRANT AGREEMENT NO 101036822

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