

News from the Farm Advisory Service:



Mineral requirements in outwintering systems

In this webinar, recorded on 6th November, independent Mineral Advisor for Ruminants Dr Annie Williams discusses the requirements of dairy and beef cattle in outwintering systems.

Annie covers different systems including herbal leys and mixed swards, and how seasonal fluctuations can impact the availability of minerals.

Find our recording by using QR code below, or visit our YouTube channel at www.fas.scot/sounds



Preparing for Sustainable Farming (PSF) Deadline

All claims must be submitted by end of February 2025

A guide to selecting finished cattle

Knowing when your cattle are ready for sale is a crucial factor in optimising returns from your beef enterprise.

Weighing cattle often can help you to manage your finishing system efficiently. By using weights and splitting the cattle into groups, you can ensure that the cattle are getting appropriate feed rations to achieve the desired daily live weight gains. The killing out percentage (KO%) is the deadweight as a percentage of the liveweight with a higher KO% desired as it gives you more return on your cattle. Typical KO%'s are from 50-60%. You are looking for cattle to be in a deadweight range of 270–400 kg. Factors affecting the killing out percentages include breed, gender, stomach fill, cleanliness and finishing system.

You should also consider their carcass conformation, when selecting which animals to sell. The three areas to feel for conformation are the shoulder, loin and hindquarter and the three areas to feel for fat cover are the loin, ribs and either side of the tailhead. The conformation is graded E, U, R, O and P. E is excellent, P is poor. The fat class is graded with numbers 1-5, where the higher the number the higher the fat cover.

For retail purposes, the ideal carcass weight is around 330 kg with a carcass confirmation of R4L. Base price is usually set on an R4L carcass, E and U 2s, 3s and 4s will receive a premium on top of the base price. As the grade moves further down the conformation and up the fat class from R4L it will be base price less a penalty. This is because more trimming is required and there is a reduction of saleable meat.

When presenting your cattle for sale you should have:

- Two matching tags – ensure these are legible.
- A passport which matches the animal.
- Food Chain Information (FCI) document filled out correctly.
- Clean animals - particularly around the belly and brisket, clipped if necessary

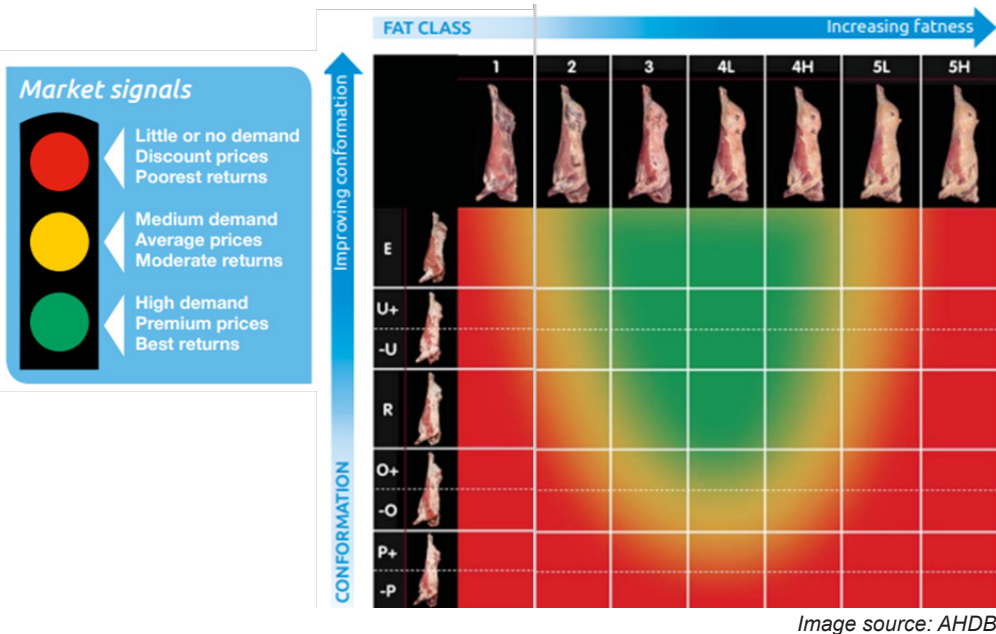


Image source: AHDB

Kirstyn Blackwood & Olivia Whitford, SAC Consulting

To read our article in full, please visit: www.fas.scot/article/a-practical-guide-to-selecting-finished-cattle/

Free Events

At the Farm Advisory Service we run a range of events both online and in-person.

Visit www.fas.scot/events to sign up or contact the advice line and we'll help you get booked on.

Dairy Benchmarking Workshop 3
Stranraer, 28th January, 6:30pm - 9:00pm

Sustainable Sheep Systems - Tail Docking & Castration
Online, 28th January, 7:00pm - 8:00pm

Nutrient Management Workshop - Turriff
Oldmeldrum, 29th January, 10:00am - 2:30pm

Solution to Pollution - On Farm Pollution Risks
Dalcross, 30th January, 10:30am - 3:00pm

Luther Water Catchment Approach to Flood Mitigation
Laurencekirk, 31st January, 10:00am - 2:00pm

Common Grazings Finance and Procedures - Helmsdale Part 2
Helmsdale, 4th February, 7:00pm - 9:30pm

Home saved seed

With cereal prices falling and margins shrinking, more growers will be tempted to look at saving costs. A route for some will be home saving barley seed, which can offer significant savings and may seem attractive where malting barley hasn't been sold or found a market.

So what are the key considerations for growers looking to home save seed?

Grain should be run over a cleaner, as this removes contaminants such as weed seeds and chaff as well as split and smaller grains. A good clean sample of bigger, bolder grain will have more vigour, making calibrating seed rates easier and also making sure seed will flow better in the drill - avoiding any embarrassing blank strips!

Grain should also be tested – around 3-500g should be sent to a laboratory with germination and disease testing. Germination is one of the key tests and ideally germination levels should be over 90%. If its slightly below this, and remember certified seed requires only a germination of over 85%, then you should up your seed rate accordingly.

To treat or not to treat is also a question that many growers will face and indeed consider, if only to keep costs down. While there are a number of growers who will clean their seed only and choose not to treat their seed, this policy only works best if it is free from disease and being sown into warmer soils later in the season. Using these stocks over time can also see seed-borne diseases significantly accumulate in a crop in just a few seasons. Testing your seed for disease first is therefore an important decision-making tool.

Key diseases to test for are loose smut with thresholds of 0.5% being the maximum infection level in most seed stocks, and 0.2% in higher voluntary standard stocks. With the infection carried deep within the seed as opposed to the surface, it can be harder to manage and growers should resist the urge to cut back rates of seed treatments.

Other diseases to look for are Net Blotch, with the recommendation to treat if infection levels are over 15%. Leaf stripe should also be tested for with a threshold of 2%. Other tests to consider, particularly if it is felt there may be a problem, are for ergot, covered smut and *Fusarium*, although *Michodochium* is less of a concern in barley than other cereals.

George Chalmers, SAC Consulting

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service is funded by the Scottish Government. It is delivered by SAC Consulting, part of Scotland's Rural College, and Ricardo Energy and Environment.



National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

If you need more advice on any topic, the Farm Advisory Service has a range of support and help available:

Advice line

For free telephone advice on a wide variety of topics including cross compliance, water framework directive requirements, climate change and other technical issues call us on 0300 323 0161 or email advice@fas.scot. The advice line operates between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Bespoke Advice and Grants

FAS can also help you to increase the profitability and sustainability of your farming business through Scottish Government grants including Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) – worth up to £2,000.

The ILMP will identify opportunities and cost savings for your business, based on an independent and confidential assessment of your business by an experienced farm business adviser of your choosing. As part of your plan you can choose to benefit from up to two further specialist advice plans.

Online

Our website contains articles, videos and much more at www.fas.scot



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