The Farm Management Handbook

SRDP Farm Advisory Service

Beef Cattle

The UK reference for farm business management

SAC CONSULTING

Part of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

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Introduction

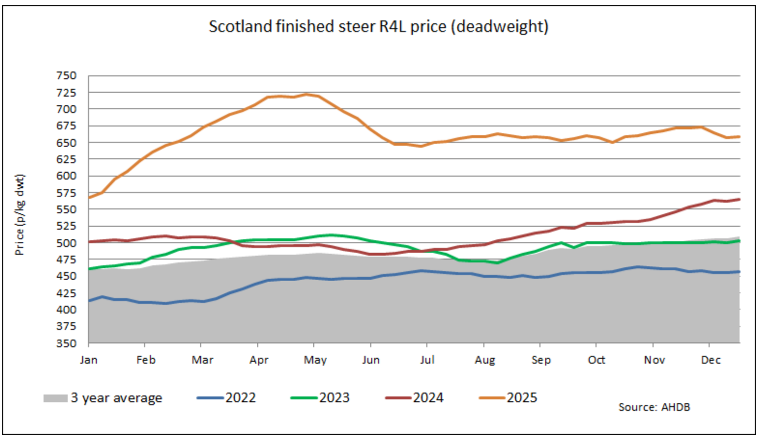
Markets and price drivers

The dynamic of the UK beef herd continues to alter, with BCMS and ScotEID cattle population data showing, annual decreases in the suckler breeding herd, however, it shows growth in production of beef from the dairy. The number of beef-sired calves has increased significantly from 2018.

Scotland's suckler herd continues to contract, which remains a concern for the industry. Scotland has recorded a 15% decline in the Scottish beef breeding herd during the past decade with 373,000 breeding beef cows reported in June 2025. In Scotland 56% of cows are now kept on only 16% of holdings. The year-on-year decline in the suckler herd in E&W has continued to outpace the decline in Scotland, with a 5.3% contraction reported in December 2024. English suckler numbers were reportedly sitting at 627,000 head in January 2025.

The reduction in the national herd has largely happened due to low profitability in beef enterprises and the economics of production due to high production costs. These have come around due to volatility of global markets due to world conflict and extreme weather events making inputs at a premium price. Lack of succession and labour as well as land values and investment needs for compliance have all contributed to the decline in suckler herd numbers. In addition, the cull beef price has been at a premium, which has allowed many producers to look at the efficiency of individual animals, which has resulted in culls of older and non-efficient animals. Attractive cull cow prices have also contributed to herd dispersals.

The beef price is largely dictated by domestic and global demand, supply and the price point, and how competitive our product is against other countries. Scottish prices started 2025 extremely strongly, with record farmgate prices realised across the beef sector.



At the start of the year finished beef prices in Scotland were sitting at 610-615p/kg/dwt as consumer demand and tightening cattle supplies contributing to prices lifting by 25p/kg/dwt in a fortnight.

The first third of 2025, recorded an unprecedented surge in beef prices, with deadweight increasing by 28% between the final week of 2024 and the end of April 2025, when prices reached a peak of 722p/kg deadweight.

While the surge in prices was welcome for cattle producers, prices at these levels placed severe pressure on processing margins, likely contributing to an abattoir closure in June. The increase in farmgate prices inevitably filtered through the supply chain; ultimately this reduced the volumes that consumers purchased. Although households allocated considerably more money to beef, the volume purchased reduced as consumers used various mechanisms to manage spend, such as reducing pack sizes or purchasing a smaller range of beef products.

By mid-May prices were beginning to drop back and, over a six-week period, dropped back to 640/650p/kg dwt. Finished prices fell by more than 10% and then stabilised in the third quarter. Prime cattle prices held firm throughout September and the first half of October, despite a seasonal lift in weekly slaughter, pointing to resilient demand. While prices sat around 9% below their spring peak, they remained around 25% higher than 2024, supported by lower production in 2025.

Festive period buying resulted in a small price uplift in November, before unwinding in mid-December. Finished cattle prices were around 8% below their spring peak but still up 18% on the previous year and 45% above the five-year average.

Most of the Scottish processing capacity is now controlled by Irish companies. The UK is still heavily reliant on imports of beef, particularly from Ireland. However, imports from Australia and New Zealand have also risen during 2025. Competitively priced beef from Brazil and Uruguay was also seen on shelves in 2025.

The Irish and UK have aligned closer together, making our price competitive. The volume of beef imported to the UK has a major effect on the UK price. The UK also exports beef and has seen increasing levels to countries such as Hong Kong, Canada and the Philippines.

Volatility and lack of certainty impacts producer confidence especially considering beef production’s long lead-time. Meeting carcase specification of the intended market is essential, and a short finishing period is likely to be most cost effective. Carcase balance issues also influence the producer price, for example, demand for higher value steaks over the BBQ season can lift whole carcase value. Beef demand is equally sensitive to inflation, the competitiveness of beef imports and alternative proteins such as chicken.

Cull cow prices remained strong throughout 2025 as cull cow trade continued to exceed all expectations, driven by UK demand for manufacturing beef. Cow prices recorded an unusually large seasonal upturn at the start of 2025, before stabilising ahead of spring when the market tends to stabilise. Cow prices have continued to run slightly closer to prime prices than usual, reflecting tighter supply and firm demand for manufacturing grade beef. At the end of April 2025, a 400kg carcase at 590p/kg equated to £2,360 an increase of £560 since December 2024.
By the end of October 2025, cow prices sat around 6% below the spring peak but 35-40% higher than the previous year, signalling a stronger market for cow beef than for prime beef. Despite a seasonal uplift in slaughter towards the end of the year, cull cow values remained stable. Cow slaughterings were lifted by increased contribution from the dairy herd, a result of the rapidly falling milk price as some dairy producers increased culling rates to maximise efficiency, therefore increasing cow kill. At the end of the year cull cow prices were sitting at 570p/kg dwt.

With few exceptions, beef is traded on the commodity spot market and therefore most producers cannot use forward contracts or other price levelling mechanisms as a risk management tool. There is now a great deal of interest in shortening supply chains and dealing with or close to the end consumer. While the whole beef industry can't do this, there are opportunities for some businesses to deal directly with their consumer and ensure both profitability and business resilience.

Marketing
Most prime cattle marketed in Scotland are sold direct to the slaughterhouse and sold deadweight. However, a large proportion will be traded at some stage in their lives through the auction system. The live cattle auction provides a valued service, bringing many buyers and sellers together and creating genuine, healthy competition to buy livestock.

While some farmers sell all their cattle on one day, many seek to spread their risk by targeting several large sales per year. Price can be influenced by gaining feedback from buyers and selling the right type of cattle at the appropriate sales. Similarly, when selling direct to processors, a higher price might be achievable if most of the in-specification cattle can be delivered at pre-arranged times and/or agreed to be spread throughout the year.

Margins
The bottom-line contribution of cattle is highly sensitive to the sales price. With the current market system, farmers have very limited options to influence the price they receive. For most farmers, efficiency savings are

the key to improving financial performance. Efficiency savings also bring about a reduction to the carbon footprint for individual farm businesses.

The most profitable suckler cow enterprises make a positive net margin before subsidy. Top performing suckler beef systems tend to rear more calves per cow, to heavier weights, using less purchased feed. To achieve this, grassland management is key. Furthermore, while fixed costs may be lower, they are also diluted by selling more kilos of beef. The best farmers target investment in infrastructure and equipment towards things that lead to cost savings.

The high cull cow price resulted in large numbers of cows being culled. Scotland now has less than 400,000 suckler cows, sitting at 394,709, which is a decrease of 3.5% in the year.

This contraction of the breeding herd will continue to have ramifications for both store cattle availability and the supply of finished cattle to maintain critical mass in the country. A further decline in Scotland's beef herd in 2023 means that a reduced 2024 calf crop follows a 2.7% fall in calf registrations in 2023, pointing to further tightening of store cattle availability in 2025 and continued pressure on prime cattle availability in 2026. Finisher's margins have been under pressure at the start of this year, due to increased store cattle prices. Store cattle prices in January started very strongly with many markets reporting £4/kg liveweight. Competition for stores is increasing and crucially approx. 20% of all Scottish store cattle is sold to English finishers.

Other benefits

It is important to remember that the cows form part of a business. How the enterprise complements other parts of the business is also important. For example, the share and spread of demand for labour and machinery will affect the success of the enterprise mix in a business. Furthermore, well managed multiple enterprises can spread risk and improve cash flow, having additional and multiple sale dates.

Suckler cows play a vital role in managing upland grazings, providing benefit to biodiversity, landscape management and grazing quality. Mixed livestock grazing systems also contribute to reduced worm burdens for both cattle and sheep. Their manure is also an important source of nutrients for arable cropping as part of a crop rotation. Consequently, any enterprise should not be viewed in isolation.

Subsidies and support

The Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme (SSBSS), commenced in 2015. Payment is made on male and female calves, which are at least 75% beef bred, born on your holding and have been kept there for at least 30 days. For the 2024 Scheme year, the net payment rate per eligible calfs on the mainland was £105.10 and £151.24 on the islands. Actual payment rates are determined by the number of calves claimed each year and the exchange rate for that year. A total of 347,546 calves were claimed across both mainland and island, with a 6% drop on mainland claims and 2% drop in island claims compared to 2023 scheme year. . . Payments are confirmed once applications are validated in the spring following the year of claim. . 2024 claims was the final claims to be delivered before calving interval conditionality is applied. From 2025 onwards, calves will only be eligible for a SSBSS payment if their dam has a calving interval of 410 days or less. Heifers' calves will be eligible provided they meet the other conditions of the scheme as for first calvers, no calving internal is established.

Those claiming support for 10 calves or fewer in 2026 will not need to meet the calving interval requirement.

For further details on payments and the requirements of the SSBSS see the Rural Aid Schemes section.

General Reference Data

Store cattle valuations
The sale value of store cattle can vary depending on time of sale. This variation has been removed for the gross margins.

The age and weight of calves at sale varies depending on season or month of calving - *be cautious when comparing spring and autumn calving herds.*

Note that an increasing share of fixed costs are attributable as the length of time trading stock spend on farm increases – this is true where other breeding or trading stock could have made use of the farm resources.

Foster calves
To reduce risk of disease, it is assumed that no foster calves are bought to replace dead calves. No cost for replacement calves has been included in the margins thus, if foster calves are bought, the appropriate adjustment should be made to the gross margin.

Liveweight to deadweight-price conversion
To calculate the deadweight price, divide the liveweight price by the killing out percentage (KO %). For example: 200 p/kg / 0.52 = 385 p/kg deadweight.

See quick reference table overleaf:

Liveweight Price (p/kg)	Killing out % 50%	52%	54%	56%	58%	60%
	Deadweight price (p/kg)					
200	400	385	370	357	345	333
202	404	388	374	361	348	337
204	408	392	378	364	352	340
206	412	396	381	368	355	343
208	416	400	385	371	359	347
210	420	404	389	375	362	350
212	424	408	393	379	366	353
214	428	412	396	382	369	357
216	432	415	400	386	372	360
218	436	419	404	389	376	363
220	440	423	407	393	379	367
222	444	427	411	396	383	370
224	448	431	415	400	386	373
226	452	435	419	404	390	377
228	456	438	422	407	393	380
230	460	442	426	411	397	383
232	464	446	430	414	400	387
234	468	450	433	418	403	390
236	472	454	437	421	407	393
238	476	458	441	425	410	397
240	480	462	444	429	414	400
242	484	465	448	432	417	403
244	488	469	452	436	421	407
246	492	473	456	439	424	410
248	496	477	459	443	428	413
250	500	481	463	446	431	417

Hill Suckler Cows

PHYSICAL DATA

Calving period	Spring Feb-Apr	Autumn Sep-Nov
Calves weaned per 100 cows put to the bull	90%	90%
Month of weaning	October	July
Days to weaning	220	270
Month of sale	October	October
Lwt of calves: at weaning (kg)	235	270
Lwt of calves: at sale/transfer (kg)	235	335
Herd life of cows (years)	7	7
Herd life of bulls (years)	4	4
Cow mortality (%)	1	1
Calf mortality (%)	4.5	4.5
Cow:bull ratio (:1)	35	35
Feeding/cow and calf (winter days):	210	210
silage (t)	5.5	7.5
straw (kg)	-	-
creep feed (kg) (incl. pre sale)	-	250
cow concentrates (kg)	50	200
cow cobs (kg)	50	50
grazing (hill/rough pasture)	>0.5	>0.6
Silage fertiliser (kg N/ha)	125	125
Silage:		
yield (t/ha from 1-cut)	20	20
DM quality (g/kg)	300	300
ME quality (MJ/kg DM)	10	10
Rough grazing (ha)	>0.6	>0.5
Silage & aftermath grazing (ha)	0.28	0.375
Housing system:		
Straw for general use incl. calving pens	0.33	0.42
Straw bedding (if in bedded courts) (t)	1.25	1.50

Based on bought-in straw.

* Amend bedding costs for cows outwintered or housed on straw.

Assumptions:

1. Grazing is assumed to be hill grazing with some improvements, carrying a maintenance charge of £50/grazing livestock unit.
2. SSBSS value is based on mainland payments, adjusted for living calves at 30 days of age. For further detail on this scheme see Subsidies and Support, earlier in this section.

Hill Suckler Cows

GROSS MARGIN DATA

	Spring	Autumn
Calving period	**Feb-Apr**	**Sep-Nov**
OUTPUT	**£/cow**	**£/cow**
Calf sales (lwt)		
Steers / Heifers		
350 kg @ 367 p / 320 kg @ 367 p	-	1107
250 kg @ 367 p / 220 kg @ 367 p	776	-
Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme	97	97
	873	1204
Less: Replacement - cow	128	128
bull	28	28
	717	1048
VARIABLE COSTS		
Cow concentrates @ £350/t	18	70
Cow cobs @ £310/t	16	16
Creep feed @ £280/t	-	70
Vet & medicines	38	38
Straw bedding @ £135/t (bought-in)	45	57
Commission, haulage & tags	61	74
	178	325
Gross Margin before forage	539	723
Forage variable costs:		
silage @ £223/ha	61	84
grazing @ £10/grazing livestock unit	11	15
	72	99
Total Variable Costs	250	424
GROSS MARGIN £/cow	467	624

Sensitivity-Change ±	**Change in Gross Margin/head (£)**	
10 p/kg in lwt sale price	21	30
Sale weight ± 10kg	33	33
Herd life ± 1 year	29	29

Replacement Cost prices:

Cull cow	£1,725	In-calf heifer (purch.)	£2,500
Cull bull	£2,080	Replacement bull	£6,000

Upland Suckler Cows - Mainly Silage Diets

PHYSICAL DATA

Breed: Commercial cows bred to a range of bulls, mostly continental.

Calving period	**Feb-Apr**	**May-Jun**	**Aug-Oct**
Calves weaned	92%	92%	92%
Month of weaning	October	December	July
Days to weaning	220	200	300
Month of sale	October	April	October
Lwt of calves: at weaning (kg)	275	260	330
Lwt of calves: at sale/transfer (kg)	275	350	400
Herd life of cows (years)	7	7	7
Herd life of bulls (years)	4	4	4
Cow mortality (%)	1	1	1
Calf mortality (%)	4.5	4.5	4.5
Cow:bull ratio (:1)	35	35	35
Feeding/cow and calf (winter days):	180	180	200
silage (t)	4.8	6.9	7.5
straw (t)	0.3	0.2	0.35
calf concentrates (kg)	100	280	365
cow concentrates (kg)	100	150	200
Grazing fertiliser (kg N/ha)	125	125	125
Silage & aftermath fertiliser (kgN/ha)	200	200	200
Silage:			
yield (t/ha from 1-cut)	23	23	23
DM quality (g/kg)	300	300	300
ME quality (MJ/kg DM)	10.5	10.5	10.5
Overall forage area (ha):			
silage and aftermath grazing	0.24	0.25	0.38
grazing	0.30	0.30	0.34
	0.54	0.55	0.72
Housing system: In cubicles*			
Straw for general use incl. calving pens	0.33	0.33	0.42
Straw bedding (if in bedded courts) (t)	1.25	1.75	1.50

Based on bought-in straw, adjust if home-grown.

* Amend bedding costs for cows outwintered or housed on straw.

Assumptions:

1. Mainly grass farm either buying in all straw and concentrates or growing small amount of cereals. May/June calves weaned in February when on silage diets.
2. SSBSS value is based on mainland payments, adjusted for living calves at 30 days of age. For further detail on this scheme see Subsidies and Support, earlier in this section.

Upland Suckler Cows - Mainly Silage Diets

GROSS MARGIN DATA

Calving period									**Feb-Apr**	**May-Jun**	**Aug-Oct**
OUTPUT									**£/cow**	**£/cow**	**£/cow**
Calf sales (lwt - 92% crop)											
Steers					Heifers						
290 kg @	367	p			260 kg @	367	p		929	-	-
370 kg @	367	p			330 kg @	367	p		-	1182	-
420 kg @	367	p			380 kg @	367	p		-	-	1351
Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme									99	99	99
									1028	1281	1450
Less: Replacement -					cow				158	158	158
					bull				40	40	40
									830	1083	1252
VARIABLE COSTS											
Cow concentrates @ £350/t									35	53	70
Calf concentrates @ £280/t									28	78	102
Vet & medicines									40	40	40
Feeding straw @ £119/t (bought-in)									36	24	42
Bedding straw @ £119/t (bought-in)									39	39	50
Commission, haulage, tags & levies									68	78	85
									246	312	389
Gross Margin before forage									583	770	862
Forage variable costs:											
silage @ £223/ha									54	56	85
grazing @ £202/ha									61	61	69
									115	117	154
Total Variable Costs									361	429	543
GROSS MARGIN £/cow									468	653	708
GROSS MARGIN £/ha									867	1188	984

Sensitivity-Change ±	**Change in Gross Margin/head (£)**		
10 p/kg in lwt sale price	25	32	36
Sale weight ± 10kg	33	34	33
Herd life ± 1 year	35	35	35

Replacement cost prices:

Cull cow	£2,040	In-calf heifer (purch.)	£3,000
Cull bull	£2,340	Replacement bull	£8,000

Suckler Cows - Mainly Straw Diets

PHYSICAL DATA

Breed: Dairy-beef cross cows bred to range of bulls, mostly continental.

Calving period	**Feb-Apr**	**May-Jun**	**Aug-Oct**
Calves weaned (%)	92%	92%	92%
Month of weaning	October	December	July
Days to weaning	220	200	300
Month of sale	October	April	October
Lwt of calves: at weaning (kg)	275	260	330
Lwt of calves: at sale/transfer (kg)	275	350	400
Herd life of cows (years)	7	7	7
Herd life of bulls (years)	4	4	4
Cow mortality (%)	1	1	1
Calf mortality (%)	4.5	4.5	4.5
Cow:bull ratio (:1)	35	35	35
Feeding/cow and calf (winter days):	180	180	200
silage (t)	1.5	-	-
straw (t)	1.5	2.2	1.3
calf concentrates (kg)	100	330	415
cow concentrates (kg)	600	550	1,500
Grazing fertiliser (kg N/ha)	125	125	125
Silage & aftermath fertiliser (kg N/ha)	175	-	-
Silage:			
yield (t/ha from 1-cut)	23	23	23
DM quality (g/kg)	300	300	300
ME quality (MJ/kg DM)	10.5	10.5	10.5
Overall forage area (ha):			
silage and aftermath grazing	0.07	-	-
grazing	0.34	0.38	0.40
	0.41	0.38	0.40
Housing system: Straw bedding assumed*			
Straw bedding (t)	0.75	1.05	0.90

Based on home-grown straw, adjust if bought-in.

* Amend bedding costs for cows outwintered or housed elsewhere.

Assumptions:

1. Mixed farm growing sufficient grain to cover concentrate and straw feeding/bedding requirements. Only purchasing protein and minerals. May/June calves weaned earlier to reduce cow wintering costs. Small amount of silage made to cover extra grass growth in early season.
2. SSBSS value is based on mainland payments, adjusted for living calves at 30 days of age. For further detail on this scheme see Subsidies and Support, earlier in this section.

Suckler Cows - Mainly Straw Diets

GROSS MARGIN DATA

Calving period	**Feb-Apr**	**May-Jun**	**Aug-Oct**
OUTPUT	**£/cow**	**£/cow**	**£/cow**
Calf sales (lwt - 92% crop)			
Steers / Heifers			
290 kg @ 367 p / 260 kg @ 367 p	929	-	-
370 kg @ 367 p / 330 kg @ 367 p	-	1182	-
420 kg @ 367 p / 370 kg @ 367 p	-	-	1334
Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme	99	99	99
	1028	1281	1433
Less: Replacement - cow	158	158	158
bull	40	40	40
	830	1083	1235
VARIABLE COSTS			
Cow concentrates @ £190/t (home-mix)	114	105	285
Calf concentrates @ £295/t (home-mix)	30	97	122
Feeding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	135	198	117
Bedding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	68	95	81
Vet & medicines	40	40	40
Commission, haulage & tags	68	78	84
	455	613	729
Gross Margin before forage	374	469	505
Forage variable costs:			
silage @ £223/ha	15	-	-
grazing @ £268/ha	91	102	107
	106	102	107
Total Variable Costs	561	715	836
GROSS MARGIN £/cow	268	367	398
GROSS MARGIN £/ha	662	967	996

Sensitivity-Change ±	**Change in Gross Margin/head (£)**		
10 p/kg in lwt sale price	25	32	36
Sale weight ± 10kg	33	34	33
Herd life ± 1 year	35	35	35

Replacement cost prices:

Cull cow	£2,040	In-calf heifer (purch.)	£3,000
Cull bull	£2,340	Replacement bull	£8,000

Spring Calving Cows Producing 18 - 20 Month Finished Cattle

PHYSICAL DATA

Breed: Commercial cows bred to a range of bulls, mostly continental.

		Steers	Heifers
Calving period		Feb-Apr	Feb-Apr
Calves weaned (%)		92%	92%
Month of weaning		October	October
Calves sold finished (%)		91%	91%
Sale weight (kg lwt)		650	600
Dead weight (kg dwt)		365	340
Weaning weight (kg lwt)		290	260
Herd life of cows (years)		7	7
Herd life of bulls (years)		4	4
Cow:bull ratio (:1)		35	35
Feeding/cow and calf (winter days):		180	180
silage (t)		5.0	5.0
straw bedding (t)		2.0	2.0
calf concentrates (kg) pre-weaning		100	100
cow concentrates (kg)		100	100
Forage area (ha):	silage + aftermath	0.16	0.16
	grazing	0.30	0.30
Overwintered calves:			
Feeding period 180 days, October-April			
Liveweight gain (kg)		144	144
Average daily liveweight gain (kg)		0.8	0.8
Feeding: barley/protein/minerals (t)		0.38	0.4
silage (t)		3.25	3.0
Silage area (ha)		0.11	0.10
Finishing cattle:			
Feeding period (days):	at grass	145	145
	housed	54	60
Liveweight gain		216	196
Daily liveweight gain:	at grass	1	0.9
	housed	1.3	1.1
Feeding: concentrates at grass (t)		0.20	0.25
barley/protein/minerals in house (t)		0.65	0.70
straw fed in house (t)		0.1	0.1
Grazing area (ha)		0.23	0.20

Housing system: Straw bedding assumed, home-grown*

* Amend bedding costs for cows outwintered or on slurry systems.

Assumption: SSBSS value as per note for Upland Suckler Cows.

Spring Calving Cows Producing 18 - 20 Month Finished Cattle

GROSS MARGIN DATA

	Spring born Steer £/cow		Heifer £/cow	
OUTPUT				
Calf sales (dwt - 91% crop)				
365 kg @ 663 p	2,202		-	
340 kg @ 663 p	-		2,051	
Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme	98		98	
	2,300		2,149	
Less: Replacement - cow	158		158	
bull	40		40	
	2,102		1,951	
VARIABLE COSTS				
Cow concentrates @ £350/t	35		35	
Calf concentrates @ £280/t	28		28	
Barley, protein & minerals @ £180/t housed	185		198	
Barley, protein & minerals @ £180/t at grass	36		45	
Feeding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	9		9	
Bedding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	180		180	
Vet & medicines	80		80	
Commission, levies & haulage	140		134	
	693		709	
Gross Margin before forage	1,409		1,242	
Forage variable costs:				
silage @ £347/ha	94		90	
grazing @ £202/ha	107		101	
	201		191	
Total Variable Costs	894		900	
GROSS MARGIN £/cow	1,208		1,051	
GROSS MARGIN £/ha (acre)	1510	(611)	1383	(560)

Sensitivity-Change ±	**Change in Gross Margin/head (£)**	
10 p/kg in dwt sale price	33	31
Not bedded on straw	180	180
£10/t in straw price	21	21

Replacement cost prices:

Cull cow	£2,040	In-calf heifer (purch.)	£3,000
Cull bull	£2,340	Replacement bull	£8,000

Overwintering Spring-Born Suckled Calves

PHYSICAL DATA

	Spring-born Steer		Spring-born Heifer	
Purchase/transfer date	October		October	
Sale/transfer date	April		April	
Feeding period (days)	180		180	
Liveweight: at purchase/transfer (kg)	290		260	
at sale/transfer (kg)	420		386	
Average daily liveweight gain (kg/day)	0.7		0.7	
Mortality (%)	1		1	
Feeding: diet basis	silage	straw	silage	straw
barley/protein/minerals (t)	0.30	0.75	0.25	0.75
silage (t)	3.5	-	3.0	-
straw (t) ME 6.5 MJ/kg DM	-	0.8	-	0.8
Silage area (ha)	0.11	-	0.10	-
Silage: yield (t/ha)	31	31	31	31
DM quality (g/kg)	300	300	300	300
ME quality (MJ/kg DM)	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5
N-fertiliser (kg/ha)	220	220	220	220
Housing system: Straw bedding assumed*.				
Straw bedding (t)	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.3

Cost @ £90/t based on home grown straw - adjust if bought in.

* Amend bedding costs if outwintered or on slurry systems.

Assumptions:

1. Silage diet concentrates phased out by 4 weeks to turnout.
2. Silage could be costed on a per tonne basis for clamp silage instead of a per hectare basis to reflect the true cost of growing, making, storing and handling silage.

Overwintering Spring-Born Suckled Calves

GROSS MARGIN DATA

	Spring-born			
	Steer		**Heifer**	
OUTPUT	**£/head**		**£/head**	
Sale value (lwt - 1% mortality):				
420 kg @ 367 p	1526		-	
386 kg @ 367 p	-		1402	
Less: Weaned calf (lwt):				
290 kg @ 367 p	1064		-	
260 kg @ 367 p	-		954	
	462		448	
VARIABLE COSTS				
Diet basis	*silage*	*straw*	*silage*	*straw*
Barley, protein & minerals @ £180/t	54	-	45	-
Barley, protein & minerals @ £180/t	-	135	-	135
Feeding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	-	72	-	72
Bedding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	45	27	45	27
Vet & medicines	35	35	35	35
Commission, levies & haulage	72	72	67	67
	206	341	192	336
Gross Margin before forage	256	121	256	112
Forage variable costs:				
silage @ £347/ha	38	-	35	-
Total Variable Costs	244	341	226	336
GROSS MARGIN £/head	218	121	222	112
GROSS MARGIN £/ha (acre)	1,982 (802)	-	2,215 (897)	-

Sensitivity-Change ±	**Change in Gross Margin/head (£)**			
10 p/kg in lwt sale price	42	42	39	39
10 p/kg in lwt purchase price	29	29	26	26
Not bedded on straw	45	27	45	27
£10/t in straw price	5	11	5	11

Finishing Spring-Born Suckled Calves Intensively at 13 Months

PHYSICAL DATA

	Spring-born	
	Steer	**Bull**
Purchase/transfer date	October	October
Sale date	June	May
Feeding period (days)	247	225
Liveweight: at purchase/transfer (kg lwt)	290	300
at sale (kg lwt)	612	650
Deadweight at sale (kg dwt)	337	364
Average daily liveweight gain (kg/day)	1.30	1.56
Mortality (%)	1	1
Feeding:		
barley/protein/minerals (t)	2.4	2.5
straw (t) ME 6.5 MJ/kg DM	0.3	0.3
Housing system: Straw bedding assumed*.		
Straw bedding (t)	0.50	0.45

Based on home-grown straw, adjust if bought-in.

* Amend bedding costs if on slurry based systems.

Finishing Spring-Born Suckled Calves Intensively at 13 Months

GROSS MARGIN DATA

OUTPUT	Steer £/head	Bull £/head
Sale value (dwt - 1% mortality):		
337 kg @ 663 p (612 kg lwt)	2,209	-
364 kg @ 651 p (650 kg lwt)	-	2,346
Less: Store purchase (lwt):		
290 kg @ 367 p	1064	-
300 kg @ 327 p	-	981
	1145	1365
VARIABLE COSTS		
Barley, protein & minerals @ £190/t	456	475
Feeding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	27	27
Bedding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	45	41
Vet & medicines	35	35
Commission, levies & haulage	118	123
Total Variable Costs	681	701
GROSS MARGIN £/head	464	664

Sensitivity-Change ±	**Change in Gross Margin/head (£)**	
10 p/kg in dwt sale price	34	36
10 p/kg in lwt purchase price	29	30
Not bedded on straw	45	41
£10/t in straw price	8	7

Finishing Year Old Autumn-Born Suckled Calves at 18 Months

PHYSICAL DATA

	Autumn-born	
	Steer	**Heifer**
Purchase/transfer date	October	October
Sale date	April	April
Feeding period (days)	164	180
Liveweight: at purchase/transfer (kg lwt)	420	380
Liveweight: at sale (kg lwt)	650	600
Deadweight at sale (kg dwt)	360	340
Average daily liveweight gain (kg/day)	1.4	1.2
Mortality (%)	1	1
Feeding:		
barley/protein/minerals (t)	1.10	0.90
kg/day	6.6	5.0
silage (t)	4.1	4.5
kg/day	25.1	25.1
Silage area (ha)	0.15	0.15
Silage: yield	31	31
DM quality (g/kg)	300	300
ME quality (MJ/kg DM)	10.5	10.5
Silage fertiliser (kg N/ha)	220	220
Housing system: Straw bedding assumed*.		
Straw bedding (t)	0.75	0.70

Based on home-grown straw, adjust if bought-in.

* For slatted court omit bedding costs.

Assumptions:

1. Calves from Upland/Lowground Suckler Cows – silage or straw diet.
2. Silage could be costed on a per tonne basis for clamp silage instead of a per hectare basis to reflect the true cost of growing, making, storing and handling silage.

Finishing Year Old Autumn-Born Suckled Calves at 18 Months

GROSS MARGIN DATA

OUTPUT	Steer £/head		Heifer £/head	
Sale value (dwt - 1% mortality):				
360 kg @ 663 p (650 kg lwt)	2,363		-	
340 kg @ 663 p (600 kg lwt)	-		2,232	
Less: Weaned calf (lwt):				
420 kg @ 367 p	1,541		-	
380 kg @ 367 p	-		1,395	
	822		837	
VARIABLE COSTS				
Barley, protein & minerals @ £190/t	209		171	
Bedding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	68		63	
Vet & medicines	26		26	
Commission, levies & haulage	124		119	
	427		379	
Gross Margin before forage	395		458	
Forage variable costs:				
silage @ £347/ha	52		52	
Total Variable costs	479		431	
GROSS MARGIN £/head	343		406	
GROSS MARGIN £/ha (acre)	2,284	(924)	2,704	(1094)

Sensitivity-Change ±	Change in Gross Margin/head (£)	
10 p/kg in dwt sale price	36	33
10 p/kg in lwt purchase price	42	38
Not bedded on straw	68	63
£10/t in straw price	7	7

Finishing Year Old Spring-Born Suckled Calves at 18 - 20 Months

PHYSICAL DATA

	Spring-born	
	Yearling steer	**Yearling heifer**
Purchase/transfer date	April	April
Sale date	December	December
Feeding period (days): at grass	140	140
housed	91	100
Liveweight: at purchase/transfer (kg lwt)	420	380
at housing (kg lwt)	532	492
at sale (kg lwt)	650	600
Deadweight at sale (kg dwt)	370	340
Average daily lwt gain: at grass (kg/day)	0.8	0.8
housed (kg/day)	1.3	1.1
Mortality (%)	0.3	0.3
Feeding:		
concentrates at grass (t)	0.20	0.25
barley/protein/minerals in house (t)	1.1	1.0
straw fed in house (t) ME 6.5 MJ/kg DM	0.1	0.1
Housing system: Straw bedding assumed*		
Straw bedding (t)**	0.25	0.20
Grazing area (ha)	0.23	0.20
Grazing fertiliser (kg N/ha)	125	125
Stocking rate at grass (animals/ha)	4.2	5.0

* Amend bedding costs if on slurry based systems.
** Based on home-grown straw, adjust if bought-in.

Finishing Year Old Spring-Born Suckled Calves at 18 - 20 Months

GROSS MARGIN DATA

OUTPUT	Steer £/head		Heifer £/head	
Sale value (dwt - 0.3% mortality):				
370 kg @ 663 p (650 kg lwt)	2,446		-	
340 kg @ 663 p (600 kg lwt)	-		2,247	
Less: Yearling calf (lwt):				
420 kg @ 367 p	1541		-	
380 kg @ 367 p	-		1395	
	905		852	
VARIABLE COSTS				
Barley, protein & minerals @ £180/t (at grass)	36		45	
Barley, protein & minerals @ £180/t (housed)	191		180	
Feeding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	9		9	
Bedding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	23		18	
Vet & medicines	19		19	
Commission, levies & haulage	127		120	
	405		391	
Gross Margin before forage	500		461	
Forage variable costs:				
grazing @ £268/ha	62		54	
Total Variable costs	467		445	
GROSS MARGIN £/head	438		407	
GROSS MARGIN £/ha (acre)	1904	(770)	2,034	(823)

Sensitivity-Change ±	**Change in Gross Margin/head (£)**	
10 p/kg in dwt sale price	37	34
10 p/kg in lwt purchase price	42	38
Not bedded on straw	23	18
£10/t in straw price	3	-

Beef Cattle Summer Finishing

PHYSICAL DATA

		(Housed)	(At Grass)
Liveweight at purchase	(kg)	450	420
Liveweight at slaughter	(kg lwt)	650	590
	(kg dwt)	357	318
Cattle bought		mid-April	mid-April
Cattle sold		mid-September	mid-September
Mortality (%)		0.15	0.15
Finishing period (days)		133	154
Liveweight gain (kg)		200	170
Daily liveweight gain (kg)		1.5	1.1
Supplementary feed:			
barley, proteins & minerals (kg)		1700	250
Straw fed in house (t) ME 6.5 MJ/kg DM		0.24	
Grazing area (ha)		0.00	0.20
Grazing fertiliser N (kg/ha)			175
Feed levels per day:			
first 8 weeks (kg)			0
next 6 weeks (kg)			2

* Feed at this level to finish by mid-September. Many will house by this time if finishing later.

Assumptions:

In practice, a proportion of the following cattle may be sold as forward stores or housed for autumn finishing at heavier weights. If so, additional concentrate feeding will be required.

Beef Cattle Summer Finishing

GROSS MARGIN DATA

OUTPUT	Steer £/head	Heifer £/head
Sale value (dwt):		
357 kg @ 663 p (650 kg lwt)	2,367	-
318 kg @ 663 p (590 kg lwt)	-	2,108
Less: Purchased store calf in April (lwt):		
450 kg @ 367 p	1,652	
420 kg @ 367 p	-	1541
	715	567
VARIABLE COSTS		
Barley, protein & minerals @ £180/t	306	45
Feeding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	22	
Bedding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	27	
Vet & medicines	19	19
Commission, levies & haulage	124	115
	498	179
Gross Margin before forage	217	388
Forage variable costs:		
grazing @ £268/ha	0	54
Total Variable costs	498	233
GROSS MARGIN £/head	217	334
GROSS MARGIN £/ha (acre)	-	1669 (675)

Sensitivity-Change ± **Change in Gross Margin/head (£)**

Calf Rearing Costs to 3 Months

PHYSICAL DATA

		Bucket fed	*Ad-lib* fed
Liveweight (kg):	at birth	40	40
	at sale, 3 months	110	115
Liveweight gain (kg/day)		0.78	0.83
Feeding period (days)		90	90
Mortality (%)		5	4
		kg	**kg**
Feeding*:	Milk substitute	28	42
	Calf concentrates	160	150
	Hay	35	30
	Bedding (straw)	0.2	0.2

* Homebred calves receive colostrum followed by whole milk up to 10 days of age.

Calf Rearing Costs to 3 Months

VARIABLE COST DATA

	Bucket fed	Ad-lib
VARIABLE COSTS		
Feed:		
milk substitute @ £2400/t	67	101
calf concentrate @ £310/t	50	47
hay (purchased) @ £150/t	5	5
	122	153
Vet & medicines & tags	26	26
Bedding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	18	18
	44	44
Total Variable Costs	166	197

Sensitivity-Change ±	Change in costs/head (£)	
£100/t in milk substitute price	2.80	4.20
£10/t in calf concentrate price	1.60	1.50

Assumptions:

1. Dairy calves do not receive SSBSS payments – eligible calves have to be 75% beef genetics.
2. Adjust straw cost if bought-in.

Intensive Finishing of Dairy Bred Bulls

PHYSICAL DATA

	Dairy Sire	Beef Sire
Breed		
Liveweight at start (kg)	120	120
Feeding period (days)	450	400
Liveweight at slaughter (kg lwt)	570	620
Deadweight at slaughter (kg dwt)	296	322
Killing out percentage (%)	52	52
Overall daily liveweight gain (kg/day)	1.0	1.25
Mortality (%)	2	2
Feeding [1]**:**		
110-120 kg liveweight/purchase to slaughter:		
concentrates at grass (t)	0.2	0.2
barley/protein/minerals in house (t)	1.60	1.70
straw (t)	0.10	0.14
silage (t)	1.8	1.8

1 For home bred calves see '*Calf rearing costs to 3 months'* for cost of feeding to 12-14 weeks (or 110-115kg lwt).

2 If housed on slurry based systems omit bedding costs.

3 Adjust straw cost if bought-in.

Intensive Finishing of Dairy Bred Bulls

GROSS MARGIN DATA

	Dairy Sire	Beef Sire
OUTPUT	**£/head**	**£/head**
Sale value (dwt - adj 3% mortality):		
296 kg @ 592 p	1,700	-
322 kg @ 623 p	-	1,946
Less: Calf purchase (3 months):		
@ £550	550	-
@ £550	-	550
	1,150	1,396
VARIABLE COSTS		
Concentrates @ £190/t	304	323
Feeding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	9	13
Bedding straw @ £90/t (home-grown)	27	54
Vet & medicines	22	22
Commission, haulage & levies, etc.	100	109
Total Variable costs	462	521
GROSS MARGIN £/head (before forage)	688	875
Forage variable costs:		
Silage @ £347/ha	52	69
Grazing @ £202/ha	93	93
Total Variable costs	607	683
GROSS MARGIN £/head	543	713

Sensitivity-Change ±	**Change in Gross Margin/head (£)**	
£10/t in concentrate price	16	17
10 p/kg in dwt sale price	28	31

Forage Based Finishing Dairy Steers at 24 Months

PHYSICAL DATA

Breed	Beef Cross
Liveweight at start (kg) [1]	120
Feeding period (days)	659
Liveweight at slaughter (kg lwt)	632
Deadweight at slaughter (kg dwt)	316
Killing out percentage (%)	50
Overall daily liveweight gain (kg/day)	0.8
Mortality (%)	3
Feeding:	
110-125 kg liveweight/purchase to slaughter:	
concentrates (2nd stage calf mix) (t)	0.15
concentrates (barley/protein/minerals) (t)	0.68
silage (t) - over two housing periods	6.4
Grazing area - over two summers (ha)	0.42
Silage area - for two housing periods (ha)	0.32
Silage: yield	20
DM quality (g/kg)	300
ME quality (MJ/kg DM)	10.5
Silage fertiliser (kg N/ha)	125

Housing system: Straw bedding assumed [2].

Straw bedding [3] (t)	0.0

1 For home bred calves see '*Calf rearing costs to 3 months*' for cost of feeding to 12-14 weeks (or 110-115kg lwt).

2 If housed on slurry based systems omit bedding costs.

3 Adjust straw cost if bought-in.

Forage Based Finishing Dairy Steers at 24 Months

GROSS MARGIN DATA

	Beef Cross [3] £/head
OUTPUT	
Sale value (dwt - adj 3% mortality):	
316 kg @ 651 p	1,995
Less: Calf purchase :	
@ £550	550
	1,445
VARIABLE COSTS	
Concentrate calf mix @ £295/t	29
Concentrate barley blend @ £190/t	129
Bedding straw @ £90/t (home grown)	-
Vet & medicines	38
Commission, haulage & levies, etc.	110
Total Variable costs	306
Gross Margin before forage	1,139
Forage variable costs:	
silage @ £223/ha	71
grazing @ £202/ha	85
	156
Total Variable costs	462
GROSS MARGIN £/head [1]	983
GROSS MARGIN £/ha (acre) [2]	664

Sensitivity-Change ±	**Change in Gross Margin/head (£)**	(269)
£10/t in concentrate price	7	
10 p/kg in dwt sale price	31	

* Unlike other beef finishing enterprises featured in the Farm

1 Unlike other beef finishing enterprises featured in the Farm Management Handbook, spanning over two years effectively incurs double the fixed cost share, which is not included above.

2 This enterprise produces a strong gross margin per head but the extensive nature of this enterprise dilutes its return per hectare.