

Feeding the beef cow during late pregnancy and beyond



Importance of nutrition

- Animals Requirements for:
 - Energy
 - Protein
 - Vitamins and Minerals
- Correct nutrition results in:
 - Improved fertility
 - Increased calf growth rates
 - Reduced calf mortality and morbidity



Feeding the Dry cow

- Manage spring calving cows to reach a BCS of 2.5- 3.0 at calving
- Require approx. 75-80 MJ ME/day; 9% CP DM (for 650kg cow)
- Minimum of 5 weeks dry
- Flat rate feeding vs cohort feeding
 - Requires accurate PD dates
- Housed vs out wintered
 - Differing energy requirements



Examples of feeding options

- Straw and Silage
- Straw and concentrate
- Hay and concentrate

- Analysis of forages is critical
- Additional vitamins and minerals
 - Various ways of delivering minerals



Feeding the calved cow

- Aim to maintain or minimise BCS loss (BCS 2.5-3.0)
- Increasing milk yield (peak at 6-8 weeks post calving)
 - Increased Energy and Protein requirements
 - 120-130 MJ ME/day; 11-12% CP DM (for 650kg cow)
- Return to ovarian cyclicity
- Avoid feed changes 6 weeks before and after the service period



Importance of forage quality

- Good quality forage reduces the requirement for supplementary feed
- Example : 650kg producing 8-10 l milk/day
 - If ad lib good quality silage (10.5-11.0 MJ ME/kg DM)
 - Require 1-3kg/head concentrates
 - If ad lib poor quality silage (9.0-10.0 MJ ME/kg DM)
 - Require 3-5kg/head concentrates



Optimise Grazing

- At the start of the grazing season grass growth rate is high
 - Increase stocking density
- Allow a higher sward height later in the season
 - Grazing quality reduces



Heifers

- Heifers are still growing (assuming age at 1st calving is around 2 years)
- Give access to the better quality grazing
- Consider early weaning if excessive loss of BCS
- Ideally manage as a separate group
 - Avoids competition with older cows



Summary

- Nutrient requirements change throughout the production cycle
- Balance rations for energy, protein, vitamins and minerals
- Have forages analysed
- Engage with your vet and nutritionist

