



Replacement weanling heifers are now coming into their first winter, and now that cows and young stock are coming in for the winter housing period, you need to know what to feed these heifers.

Prior to their first winter, heifers should be weighed to ensure they are on target to achieve the desired body weight at mating start date (MSD). If they are not at the correct weight, supplementation should be added to their diet, as it will be too late to address the issue when it is time for breeding.

If you don't own a scales, why not join the **Bandon Co-op Heifer Rearing Programme** and get your heifers weighed professionally by an ICBF technician. Many farmers can get caught thinking that their heifers are on target, when they are not, as heifers need to be grouped and fed based on weight.

The aim for the winter months is to ensure all heifers meet the planned pre-breeding targets, and to minimise live weight variation within the group. The key target weights are that heifers are 30% of mature bodyweight at six-months-of-age and 60% of mature bodyweight at the start of breeding. The target for your weanling heifers at housing 40% of their mature body weight, and the weight in kilos should be determined by their maintenance figure.

When these weanlings leave the shed in February, the target is for them to be 50% of their mature body weight. Underweight heifers are considered to be animals that are 5% or more below their target bodyweight, which emphasises the importance of regular weighing of heifers to keep track on performance and to intervene if needs be.

The bodyweight targets for maiden heifers at breeding and for heifers pre-calving by are as follows:

	Age (months)	% of Mature Body Weight	500	550	600	650
Nov (Housing)	10	40%	200	220	240	260
February	12	50%	250	275	300	325
May (Breeding)	15	60%	300	330	360	390
Feb (Calving)	24	90%	450	495	540	585

These targets are not achieved without good husbandry, nutrition and constant monitoring and intervention, when certain heifers are beginning to slack.

In order to achieve these targets we need to:

- Ensure all heifers are treated for parasites before the housing period, as if these heifers are hampered by parasites, even if they have no clinical signs – it will be difficult for them to put on condition
- Separate lighter heifers from on-target heifers and give preferential treatment to get them back up to speed
- Feed heifers according to the quality of the silage and liveweight. On 67% DMD silage, lighter heifers will require 2kg of meal per day, you can reduce meal by 1kg/day if silage is 5% higher DMD or heifers are on/ahead of target
- Ensure that 0.3m (1ft) of feeding space is available per heifer; It is all well and good offering this meal and silage to heifers, but it won't be any good if the heifers don't have enough feeding space
- Plan to turn the lighter heifers out to grass first in February, heifers will gain up to 1kg on good spring grass.

However don't rely on early turnout to make up for poor performance during the winter period, as by following these key steps, the heifers should be on target and given the best chance to succeed within the herd.

Following these key steps will help us to meet our targets and give heifers the best chance to succeed within the herd.



24 MONTH REPLACEMENT HEIFER (21% Protein)

- ✓ This ration is specially aimed at Dairy Replacements in the first winter feeding period to maximise growth while avoiding over-conditioning
- ✓ High energy feed with high quality sources of protein such as Hipro Soya
- ✓ Achieves maximum skeleton growth and body condition before breeding, without laying down excessive fat in the developing mammary glands
- ✓ High levels of calcium and phosphorus encourage bone growth and development, building the future frame for the future herd
- ✓ Buffer included to promote rumen stability and improve performance
- ✓ Available in 25kg, mini-bulk and bulk