

Defining the Dairy's Goals for Heifer Rearing

Establishing a set of goals and finding out where the dairy is in relationship to those goals is the first step to making change. The purpose of this worksheet is to establish the farm's current state of heifer rearing and build a set of goals to work towards. Not every factor listed will be important to every farm and not every farm is currently monitoring each of these parameters, but going through the process of writing values down and comparing them to some recommendations will help producers think about all the important stages in heifer rearing.

Where is the farm now? What are the farm goals?

- | | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heifer ME305 | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First lactation peak milk | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age at first calving | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Body weight at calving | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Height of heifer at calving | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age at first breeding | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Age at puberty | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weaning age | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Average daily gain post-puberty | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Average daily gain pre-puberty | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-weaning Heifer mortality | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-weaning Diarrhea incidence | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-weaning Pneumonia incidence | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peri-natal mortality (1 to 48 hours) | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DOA (dead at birth) | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> % Calves with serum total proteins >5.5 | _____ | _____ |

The following are some recommended heifer goals gleaned from the literature.

□ Heifer ME305	Greater than the cows
□ First lactation peak milk	About 75 to 80% of the cows
□ Age at first calving	22 to 24 months
□ Body weight at calving	1300-1350 lb for Holsteins, 900 lb for Jerseys
□ Height of heifer at calving	54-55 inches for Holsteins, 48-50 inches for Jerseys
□ Age at first breeding	12-13 months (51 inches tall Holsteins, 43 Jerseys)
□ Age at puberty	9 months (at 55% of mature body weight)
□ Weaning age	45 to 60 days (variable)
□ Average daily gain post-puberty	2 lb/day for Holsteins, 1.2 lb/day Jerseys
□ Average daily gain pre-puberty	2.0 to 2.2 lb/day Holsteins, 1.4 lb/day Jerseys
□ Pre-weaning Heifer mortality	Less than 3% (variable)
□ Pre-weaning Diarrhea incidence	Less than 25%
□ Pre-weaning Pneumonia incidence	Less than 15%
□ Peri-natal mortality (1 to 48 hours)	Less than 5%
□ DOA (dead at birth)	Less than 8% Heifers, Less than 4% Cows
□ % Calves with serum total proteins >5.5	More than 85%

Resources

Chester-Jones H, Linn J. Effect of nutrition and management of dairy heifers on resultant cow longevity. University of Minnesota Extension. 2006. Available at:

<https://www.extension.umn.edu/agriculture/dairy/calves-and-heifers/effect-of-nutrition-and-management-on-longevity.pdf>

Heinrichs J, Lammers B. Monitoring dairy heifer growth. The Pennsylvania State University. 1998. 5m498PS. Available at: <http://extension.psu.edu/animals/dairy/nutrition/heifers/monitoring-heifer-growth>

Kilmer L, Bentley J. Leave no calf left behind. Iowa State University. Available at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/dairyteam/sites/www.extension.iastate.edu/files/dairyteam/LNDCB%20factsheet%20.pdf>

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