

Nutrition News

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Heifer Rearing

Heifer rearing is a vitally important part of every dairy and beef farm but often fails to receive the attention it deserves. Well-reared heifers represent a considerable investment but yield significant lifetime production benefits. The rewards gained from developing heifers to achieve their lifetime potential represents significant return on investment.

Optimum growth rates during the rearing period help to ensure heifers are mature and adequately grown to enable a first serving and calving down at 24 months. For heifers to achieve this target, they must receive an adequate supply of nutrients without the animal becoming overfat. Frame growth is key, aiming for a target height of 138cm (54") and liveweight for Friesians of 350kg at service.



The Six-point Heifer Rearing Plan

Corby Rock recommends a six-point heifer rearing plan building through the first two years of life.

1. Metabolic Programming (0-3 months)

Metabolic Programming in calves promotes high levels of growth in the first 3 months resulting in better mammary development, higher milk production and reduced age at first calving. This is achieved by maintaining good health, avoiding rumen upset and feeding quality ration with high concentrates of milk powder (150kg/litre).

2. First Grazing (3-9 months)

Approximate dates: 1st April – 31st October

Target weight: 40% mature weight

Live weight gain: 0.80kg/day

Diet: Heifers should receive 1-2kg/day high-quality grass, increasing to 2-3 kg when grass quality and/or availability deteriorates. Heifers should be housed when grass quality and availability does not support sufficient daily live weight gain.

3. First Housing (9-12 months)

Approximate dates: 1st November – 1st March

Target weight: 50% mature weight

Live weight gain: 0.80kg/day

Diet: To achieve the target weight for this period, it is important to formulate a winter feeding programme adjusted according to your farm's silage quality. Your Corby Rock Feeds advisor can assist you. On housing, it's also important to seek advice from your veterinarian on a suitable health plan and parasite control programme.



4. Breeding (12-16 months)

Approximate dates: 1st March – 31st May

Target weight: 55-60% mature weight

Live weight gain: 0.85kg/day

Diet: Heifers need very high-quality grass during this period, together with 1kg/day of high protein concentrate, e.g. Heifer Developer. If grass quality or availability deteriorates concentrates should increase to 2-3kg/day. It is of utmost importance heifers are kept on a rising plane of nutrition during the breeding season, requiring consistency in the diet at this time.



5. Second Grazing (16-21 months)

Approximate dates: 1st June – 31st October

Target weight: 80% mature weight at housing

Live weight gain: 0.75kg/day

Once enough high-quality grass quality is available, grass alone may be sufficient to achieve target weight gain. Once again, if grass quality or availability drops heifers should receive 2kg/day concentrate. As previously, it's also important to seek advice from your veterinarian on a suitable health plan and parasite control programme when the heifers are housed.

6. Second Winter (21-24 months)

Approximate dates: 1st November – 31st December

Target Weight: 90% mature cow weight pre calving






The target is to have heifers at 90% mature cow weight, so it is again important to formulate a winter feeding programme adjusted according to your farm's silage quality.

Target heights and weights

Age	Weight		Height
	Friesian	Holstein	
			Friesian/ Holstein
3 months	95	110	90
9 months	240	270	115
12 months	300	340	122
13-16 months (Breeding)	350	390	127
21 months	500	565	134
24 months	550	620	138
Mature cow	600	680	138

Diets balanced specifically for your heifers, combined with an effective development programme are essential if heifers are to reach the targets required for serving and calving down at 24 months. Over the years Corby Rock Mill has developed a range of specialist diets formulated and balanced for optimum growing rates. These tried and tested heifer developer diets have performed exceptionally well and have stood the test of time.

Corby Rock Mill Heifer Developer Feeds

Spec no.	Product	Description
45/439	Heifer Developer Pellet/Blend 20% protein	Pellet containing high quality protein balanced with optimum energy promoting lean tissue and bone growth
Pellet available in:		  
Blend available in:		 

For more information on rearing heifers and our heifer developer range, contact your local Corby Rock Mill representative.

Heifer Rearing Programme

Benefits of achieving target weight at breeding and two-year old calving

- Increased % calving to first service
- Increased number of lactations and lifetime production
- Reduced cost of production
- Reduced replacement rate
- Maintained compact calving

