

Lloyd and Peter Mortimer - Improvers

Lloyd and Peter Mortimer farm at Lizwell Farm in Dartmoor. It totals 210 ha, of which 40 ha is owned and the rest is rented. The farm is organic and is in both the Organic Entry Level Stewardship scheme and the Higher Level Stewardship scheme.

The farm is 304 metres above sea level and receives 80 inches of rainfall each year. Around 70 ha of land is in arable rotation, the rest of the land being permanent pasture with some being scrub on enclosed moorland. Around 16 ha of spring barley is grown which is under sown with a five year grass ley, half being combined and the rest whole-cropped.

Currently the beef herd consists of 125 Aberdeen Angus cows, of which 100 calve in the spring and 25 in the autumn. Cows are housed from November until they calve. Dry cows are housed in cubicles, and cows and calves housed in straw yards. The spring calving period lasts around ten weeks from 1st April to the end of May. The autumn calving period is from middle of August to the end of December. Heifers calve for the first time at three years old.

The farm currently has no formalised grazing policy. The calves are weaned at six to seven months and then out-wintered on grass silage aftermath and introduced to baled silage as the winter progresses. They then come indoors in February for one month to rest the leys before being turned back out again.

Around 15% of the heifer calves are retained for breeding replacements and the remaining heifers and bulls are finished at between 16-30 months of age, producing an average carcass weight of 260 – 420kg.

Key targets include:

- To develop a grazing rotation that deals with the range of grass types
- To investigate the option of calving at two years
- To reduce range in slaughter age



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Steve Thorne - Mentor

Steve farms 235 ha in Dartmoor, which consists of 24 ha of cereals, 77 ha of permanent pasture and 45 ha of grass leys. The rest is rented out due to a grass surplus resulting from improved grassland management on the farm.

The suckler herd consists of 88 Limousin-cross Holstein Friesian cows, put to polled black Limousin and Aberdeen Angus bulls. The calving period lasts ten weeks, running from the end of April to early June.

The majority of the cows calve outside on kale and round baled silage. Last winter, 68 cows were out-wintered on 4 ha of land.

During the summer, all cattle are grazed in paddocks of around 0.4 ha. The groups usually consist of around 40 animals and are moved every day. Calves are weaned at six months old at a weight of 220 kg, with the aim of producing a liveweight gain of 1.01 kg per day from birth to weaning. Once weaned, they are housed on a woodchip corral and are fed on round bales of red clover silage and a small amount of home-grown spring oats. Suckled calves are sold at 10 to 12 months old at the local livestock market.

Steve also rears around 150 (between 50 and 60 Holstein-Friesian steers and the rest Aberdeen Angus-cross and Limousin-cross) calves a year on a computerised milking machine. The beef-cross calves are sold as stores at 12 to 18 months old and the Holstein-Friesian steers are finished on an intensive ration at 14 to 16 months old. All animals have EID tags.



Steve Thorne