

## Finishing pure dairy-bred bulls

Philip Penrose from Bullhaw Hall Farm in South Yorkshire finishes 300 pure dairy-bred bulls each year. All bulls are sold deadweight at 14 months of age to a local meat processor, weighing on average 270kg deadweight. From birth to slaughter, bulls average 1.2 kg per day and reach a target specification of O-3.

Calves are sourced from their own dairy herd and local dairy producers with a known herd health status. Whether calves are destined for the dairy herd or the beef enterprise, they are managed the same to ensure each calf receives adequate colostrum at birth.



Calves are weaned at ten weeks old, when they are eating at least 1.5kg of calf pellets per day. They are then gradually introduced to a growing ration before switching to a finishing ration at seven months of age. The constituents of the finishing ration are shown below.

Table 1: Finishing bull ration (1 tonne)

| Mix inclusion rates                   | kg/tonne, fresh weight | Ratio in ration (%) |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Breakfast cereal blend                | 450                    | 45                  |
| Rolled barley                         | 380                    | 38                  |
| Protein concentrate                   | 90                     | 9                   |
| Evaporated yeast enriched wheat syrup | 80                     | 8                   |

The ration is fed *ad libitum* and the bulls always have access to clean, fresh straw to encourage rumination and prevent the development of acidosis. Throughout their time on the farm, the bulls remain in the same social groups to prevent aggression and avoid injuries which can have a negative impact on performance.

Bulls are susceptible to stress which can affect meat quality, therefore, Philip ensures transport distances to the abattoir are minimised and effective handling and loading systems are in place. In agreement with the abattoir, the bulls are transported to the slaughterhouse first thing in the morning so that they can be slaughtered as soon as possible after arrival.

The number of pure dairy-bred bulls being produced on Philip's farm is declining due to the use of sexed semen and beef bulls with high genetic merit within the herd. All heifers are now artificially inseminated using sexed semen and the mature cows run with a British Blue bull. Sweeper bulls are chosen for their ease of calving and high 400-day growth estimated breeding values (EBVs). This ensures that calving difficulties are minimised but high growth rates and target carcass specifications are achieved.

For further information on finishing pure dairy-bred male calves can be found in the BRP manual [Better Returns from Pure Dairy-bred Male Calves](#).