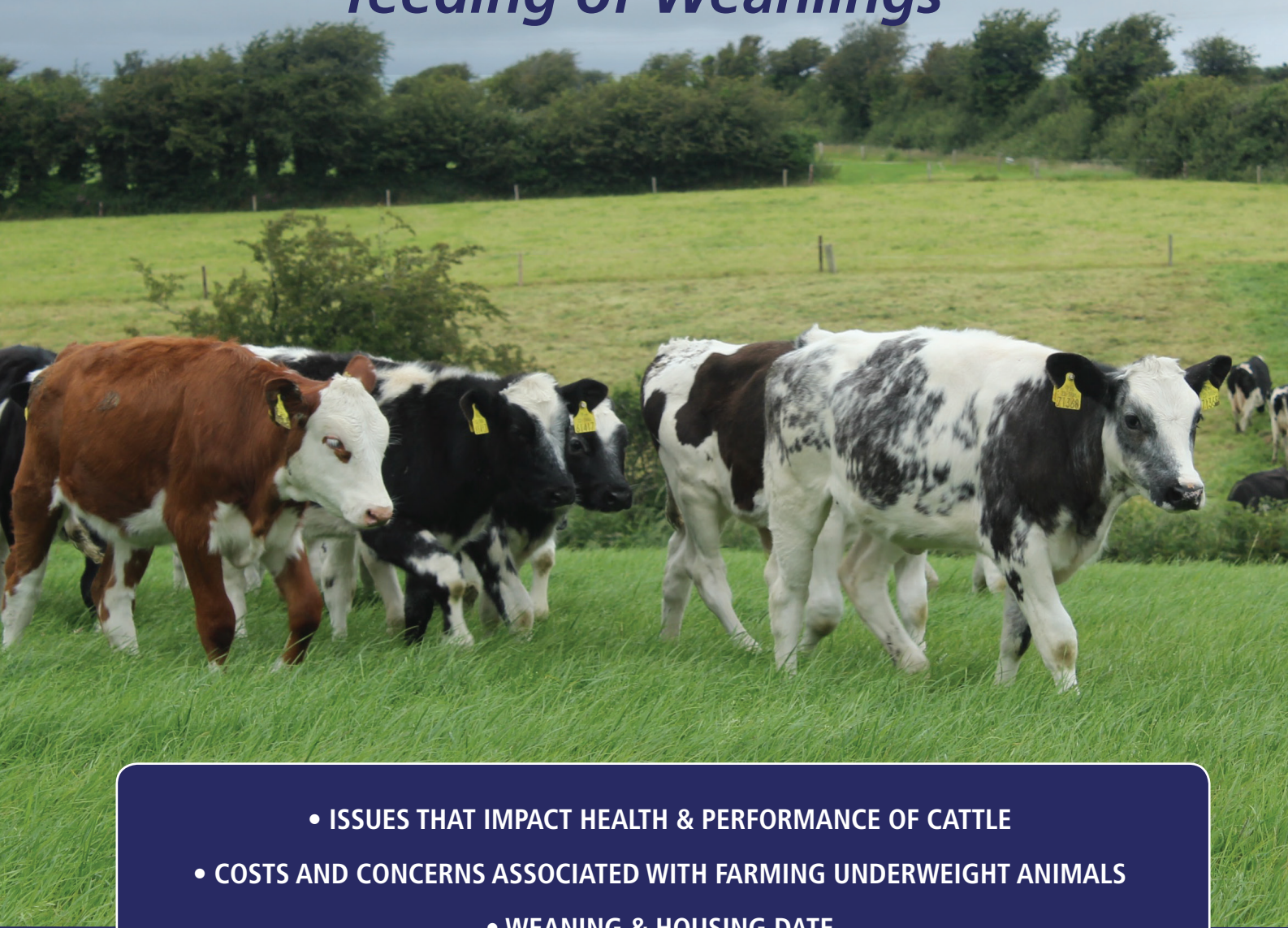


Inform Nutrition Technical Bulletin | Autumn & Winter 2017

# Autumn & Winter *feeding of Weanlings*



- ISSUES THAT IMPACT HEALTH & PERFORMANCE OF CATTLE
- COSTS AND CONCERNS ASSOCIATED WITH FARMING UNDERWEIGHT ANIMALS
  - WEANING & HOUSING DATE
- RESPIRON - SUPPORTING ANIMAL HEALTH DURING HOUSING PERIOD
  - FEEDING LEVEL REQUIRED FOR DIFFERENT QUALITY SILAGE
  - HOUSING SPACE & FEED MANAGEMENT

Weanlings are efficient animals at converting feed to live weight. It will take nearly twice as much feed to put 1kg on an animal in its second winter as it does in the first winter. A number of issues can compromise performance in the first winter. Some of the issues and solutions will be identified in this article. Some additional tips are given to help you support your business with your customers.

Regardless of whether you are feeding a beef or dairy weanling your minimum target weight gain should be close to 800gram per day. For most beef finishers, a loss of gain in the first winter will be costly to make up in the finisher period. This is because the feed cost per day for a finishing animal on a moderate level of concentrate will be €2.00 - €2.50 per day (vs €1 for weanling).

## • Costs & Concerns - Underweight animals

For the dairy animal, there is considerable cost associated with calving underweight animals. These costs manifest themselves as increase problems at calving, lower milk production and poor longevity.

**At this time of year there are number of issues that impact the health and productivity of cattle:**



**“ Target weight gain should be close to 800g per day ”**

✓ Nutrition

✓ Weaning

✓ Housing

✓ Respiratory Infections

✓ Parasites

## • Introduction of Concentrate

**From at least September onwards concentrate should be introduced.**

**The quantity of feed will depend on:**

- Cattle type
- Quantity and quality of grass available
- Weather conditions.

Feeding concentrate helps maintain target growth over the autumn but also helps reduce the stress of weaning and or housing.



**1kg per head per day is a good start. Weanling should be on 2kg per day by October 1st, for at least 10 days before housing and or weaning.**

## • Weaning & Housing Date

### - Weaning

Stressful and poor practice is associated with increased health problems and poor performance. Housing and weaning are associated with reduced antioxidant capacity which lowers the animal's ability to deal with stress and reduces the capacity of the immune system to respond. Examples of antioxidants are Vitamins C, E and A.

### - Housing date

The date you choose to house your weanling is another issue to consider. While weanlings make great 'lawn mowers', without concentrate feed, performance on winter grass can be poor. Because ground conditions are poor they are often not fed.

- **Late housed animals are often housed with significant trace element deficiencies and parasite burdens.**
- **It can take 3-4 weeks of feeding to get these animals thriving again with potential to have lost out on 2 months thrive (40-50kg).**

(This article will not deal with parasite control other than top state that feeding weanlings with burdens of worms, hoose, fluke and particularly lice will give a poor return. Lung worm in particular will increase the risk of respiratory infections both before and after housing. Speak to your Inform Nutrition Technical Advisor and they will be happy to discuss further information regarding support for animals with parasite issues.)



## • Respiro before and after weaning

Feeding **Respiro** before and after weaning is designed to support:

- The Respiratory system
- The Immune system
- The Increase of Antioxidant capacity
- Appetite at housing
- Improved Performance over the housing period

### Feeding Instructions:

Respiro should be fed for at least 5-7 days before and after housing.

The benefits of using **Respiro** include:

- ✓ Easier weaning process
- ✓ Reduced stress
- ✓ Immune System
- ✓ Better Performance

- **Respiro also contains natural oils which support the immune system specifically in the lung.**

In addition feeding a good mineral drench (**Super Booster Cattle** or **VetTech Elite Cattle drench**) at housing is a good practice in terms of reducing stress.



## • Housing Space & Feed Management

### Adequate space (1.8m<sup>2</sup> (18ft<sup>2</sup>) for a 200-220kg weanling)

Feed space and access to clean water are critical to good performance. See Table 1 for feeding guide lines.

In the event of no or low levels of concentrate being fed at the very least a mineral should be fed. **Code 23 Calf Beef Buffer** is an ideal mineral to feed in this situation. Containing high levels of minerals, vitamins and trace elements it is the ideal mineral for weanlings. The addition of **Rumbuff** and yeast ensures good intakes and maximum performance.

Table 1 gives a guide line for the amount of concentrate that needs to be fed. **Typically a balanced mineralised 15-16% protein concentrate should be fed twice per day.**

In terms of feeding rate most farmers fall into the 2kg feeding rate and unless silage is tested, this is the minimum feeding rate recommended.

### - Feed management

On many farms silage is fed to weanlings once or twice per week. In these scenarios there will be some element of secondary fermentation which will reduce the feeding value of the silage, reduce intake and performance. Ideally silage should be fed daily or at least every second day. In all circumstances silage that is prone to heating should be fed daily and allow for some feed refusal.

One of the conditions we sometimes see with weanlings is ringworm. In many cases this disease is an indicator of a poor underlying immune system. It is often seen in poor quality silage and especially where we see secondary fermentation.



Table 1- Feeding level required for different quality silage

Silage quality (DMD)	Concentrate feeding level
70	2.0
67	2.5
62	3.0

### - Secondary fermentation

Destroys the vitamin content that occurs naturally in silage. These vitamins play an important role in the immune system particularly in surface tissues like skin and the lining of the lung. Where we see issues with ringworm look at concentrate feeding level, consider supplementing the mineral contained in the feed with **Code 23 Calf Beef buffer + Yeast**. In addition using **Super Booster Cattle** or **VetTech Elite Cattle** drench and repeating after 3 weeks has shown good results in these situations.





**Ask your local Inform Nutrition Ireland advisor for further details**

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