

Planning For Profit – Wolfstar Factsheet

Beef herd objectives	To run a beef herd that can be managed alongside arable operations Fast finishing of male calves at good weights Maximise numbers of heifer calves sold for breeding Compact calving to make management, replacement selection and sale easier. Protection of herd health status critical to success. Provide FYM that boosts soil fertility and maintains soil structure
Herd structure	Pedigree herd – approx. 30 Simmental cows calving both autumn and spring, Commercial herd – 140 cows Spring Calving Originally mainly Simmental crosses with some South Devon and AA genetics. Now crossing AA bulls with SimX cows and Sim bulls with AAX cows – “experiencing benefits of hybrid vigour”
Farm size	860 acres + 40ac Seasonal Grazing. Total 900ac. (364Ha) 690 ac (279ha) crops, 200ac (81ha) grass, Roads Woods etc. 10ac (4Ha)
Bulls	Currently 8 bulls – 4 Simmental also used on pedigree herd, 4 Aberdeen Angus Bulls selected on health status, visual assessment and EBV's Higher than normal bull to cow ratio due to pedigree herd and cover in case of bull injury – avoid hiring bulls to protect health status All bulls semen tested and vet inspection each year – identifies potential structural and subfertility problems.
Bulling periods	Heifers – strict 6 week bulling period from 1 st July Cows – strict 9 week mating period from 12 th July
Calving	Calved outside after turnout in early April Official start of calving dates - Heifers – 12 th April, Cows – 23 rd April. Compact calving with 66% of cows and 80% of heifers calving in first 3 weeks of calving period
Weaning	House and wean calves by shutting behind creep gates for longer periods in late November at 6 to 7 months of age (Gradual weaning reduces stress for calf). Note – no creep feed in fields due to clash with harvest work.
Cows	Winter diet – straw plus wheat dark grains – fed according to condition Cull for undesirable characteristics – no second chances.
Steer calves	All male calves castrated (discussion point) and top 80% worked on to ad-lib cereal finishing diets after weaning. Smallest 20% taken to 18 Months. Steer calves finishing at average of 13-14 months at average of 313kg deadweight.
Heifer calves	Weaned on to high quality silage plus 1kg barley Averaged 420kg at turnout in early – mid April Retain best heifers as replacements, selected at 10 months old Good market for other heifers for breeding due to health status, breed and fact that they are well grown for their age
Herd health	Members of Premium Cattle Health Scheme. BVD accredited, Johnes Risk Level 1, Lepto and IBR vaccinated. Good separation from other cattle at farm boundaries

Percentage reared – calves reared per cow and heifer to bull

Year	Cows bulled	Calves weaned	% reared
2011	156	151	96.8
2012	156	149	95.5
2013	150	141	94.0

Suckler Herd Fertility Key Performance Indicators – Fertbench results 2011

Indicator	Value	Target	
Calves reared	97%	94%	Per cow and heifer to bull
Calves born	98%	95%	Per cow and heifer to bull
Cows calving	95%	95%	Per cow to bull
Heifers calving	88%	95%	Per heifer to bull
Cows calving	66%	65%	First 3 weeks per cow to bull
Heifers calving	82%	65%	First 3 weeks per heifer to bull
Cows bulling period	9 weeks	9 weeks	
Heifer bulling period	6 weeks	6 weeks	
Calf deaths	3%	<3%	Per calf born alive (including stillbirths)

Relative performance of enterprises at Wolfstar – Net Margins

Alex King's own figures – can't be directly compared to other standardised industry costings.

Year	Cattle	Arable crops	Per cow
	Net margin £/ha	Net margin £/ha	Net margin £/cow
Year to 31/05/12	-78	196	-42
Year to 31/05/13	162	-228	88
Year to 31/05/14	151	-13	82

Notes – includes allowance for partners labour, rented grazing not included in cattle hectares, straw cost not charged to cattle enterprise, FYM cost not charged to arable enterprises

Key points for discussion

- Integrated systems – how does the integration of the cattle and arable enterprises improve net margins for each enterprise?
- Compact calving – what are the benefits of a tight 9-10 week calving period (for Wolfstar this means having nearly all of the calves born in a 6 week period)?
- What are the main things you would need to do to achieve similar results in your own herd?
- What suggestions do you have for our host farmers?

