

Contract Rearing Dairy Heifers

A Rearer's Perspective



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The experiences learned to date from a discussion group involved in contract rearing heifers



Sligo/Leitrim Contract Rearers Discussion Group



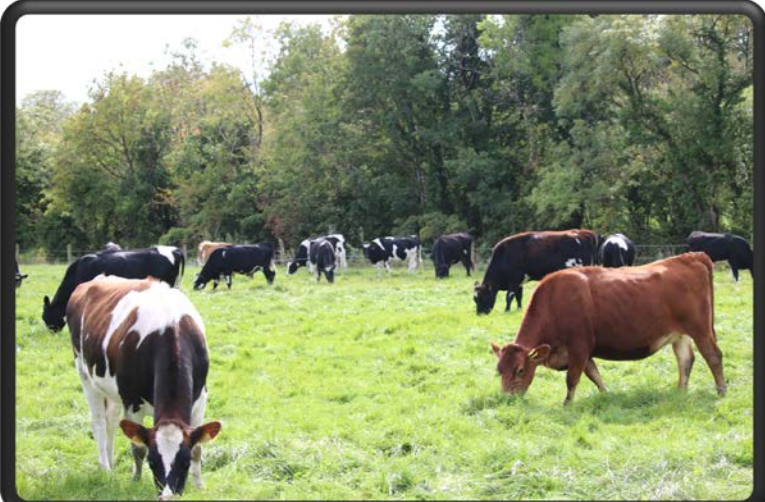
- Operating since November 2015
- 19 farmers rearing 2,090 heifers
- Plans to rear 2,600 heifers in 2019
- Range 30-300 heifers per farm

Group Profile



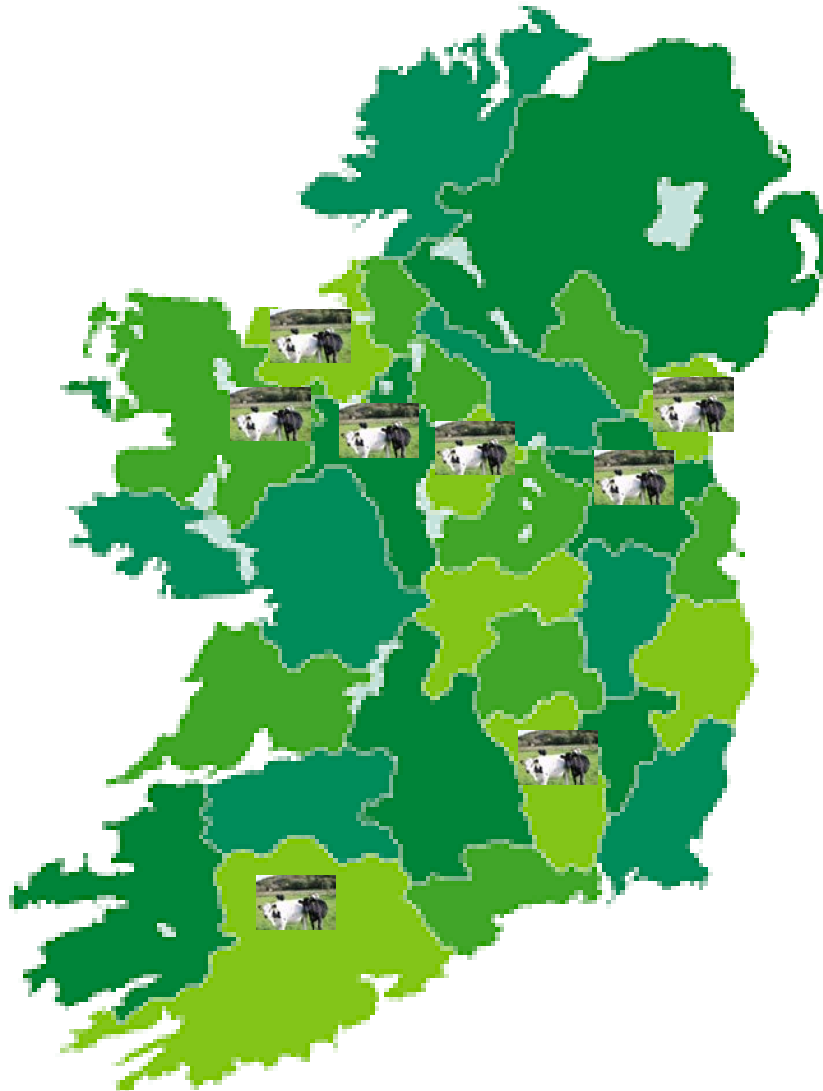
- Cattle and sheep farmers
- Contract rear in conjunction with existing enterprise
- Sole enterprise in some cases
- Generally one owner one rearer

The Heifers



- Sourced from spring compact calving herds
- Reared from 3 weeks, 12 weeks 9 months of age
- Summer Grazing
- Generally return to owner in late Oct at 20 months of age

The Dairy Herds



The Dairy Farmer

■ Responsibilities

- Communication
- Trust
- Difficult to take the first step
- Analyse his own rearing costs

■ The use of the Rearer's

- Land
- Labour
- Facilities
- Variable costs

■ **WIN-WIN**

The Rearer Kieran Henry



- Commenced farming in 2011
- Leased adjoining farm
- Establish a pedigree limousin suckler herd
- Contract rearing since 2016
- Increase stocking rate from 0.9 to 1.8 Lu/Ha
- Soil fertility
- Reseeding

Kieran Henry



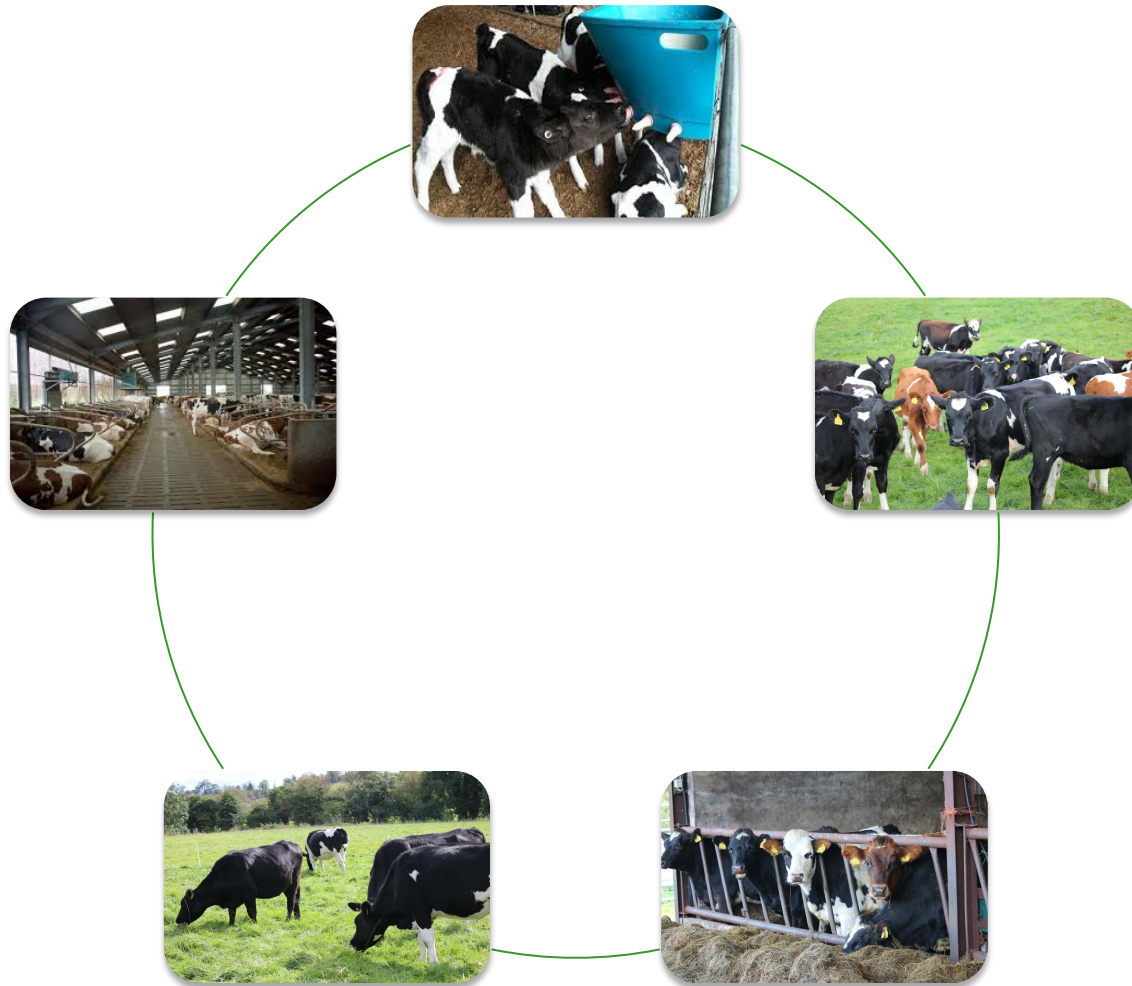
- Paddock system
- 75 + DMD silage
- New animal housing 2018
- Scanning results 2018
 - 83% in calf to AI 3 weeks
 - 96% in calf at 6 weeks
 - 100% in calf at 12 weeks
- Gross Margin €743/Ha
- Target €1,200/Ha by 2020

Group Objectives



- To increase farm profitability
- By increasing farm stocking rate
- Increasing overall farm output
- Maximising grass production and utilisation
- Increasing number of grazing days
- Producing high quality silage
- Minimising labour
- Building long term relationships
- Achieving targets

The 5 stages of heifer rearing



Benefits as outlined by group members



- A means of increasing stocking rate without investing in stock
- Allows for clear direction in farm planning
- Good for cash flow
- Clear guidelines in contract agreement
- Long term relationships can be established

Benefits as outlined by group members



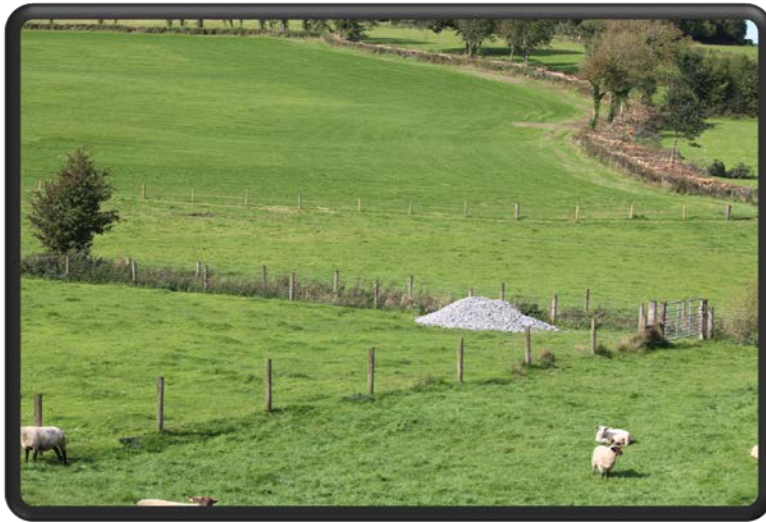
- Docile animals to work with
- Increase in farm profitability
- Gross margins for contract rearing enterprise range €743/Ha - €1,394/Ha in 2017
- Income to develop existing farm infrastructure and plan for future direction

Risks as outlined by group members



- Takes time to build trust
- Management prior to arrival
- Heifers arriving under target weights
- Heifers arriving in poor health status
- Initial contract

Risks as outlined by group members



- Technical efficiency
- Set up costs
moving herd test
- Disease risk
- Herd health plan
- The Relationship

Making Contract Rearing work



- Detailed Contract Rearing Agreement
- Mutually agreed terms & conditions
- Talk to local DVO
- Annual visit to dairy farm
- Regular weighing of stock
- Avoid average figures
- Using ICBF link for breeding and weight recording

Making Contract Rearing work



- Heifers retained by owner for comparison
- Heat synchronisation at breeding
- Maximise residency period
- Independent Intermediary agreed on by both parties
- Discussion group knowledge in the collective
- Building Trust

Support Network for Rearers

- Teagasc/Aurivo Farm Profitability Programme
- Neill Boland



- Teagasc Ballyhaise Heifer rearing unit
- Michael Fitzgerald

Guidelines for the Contract Rearing of Replacement Heifers

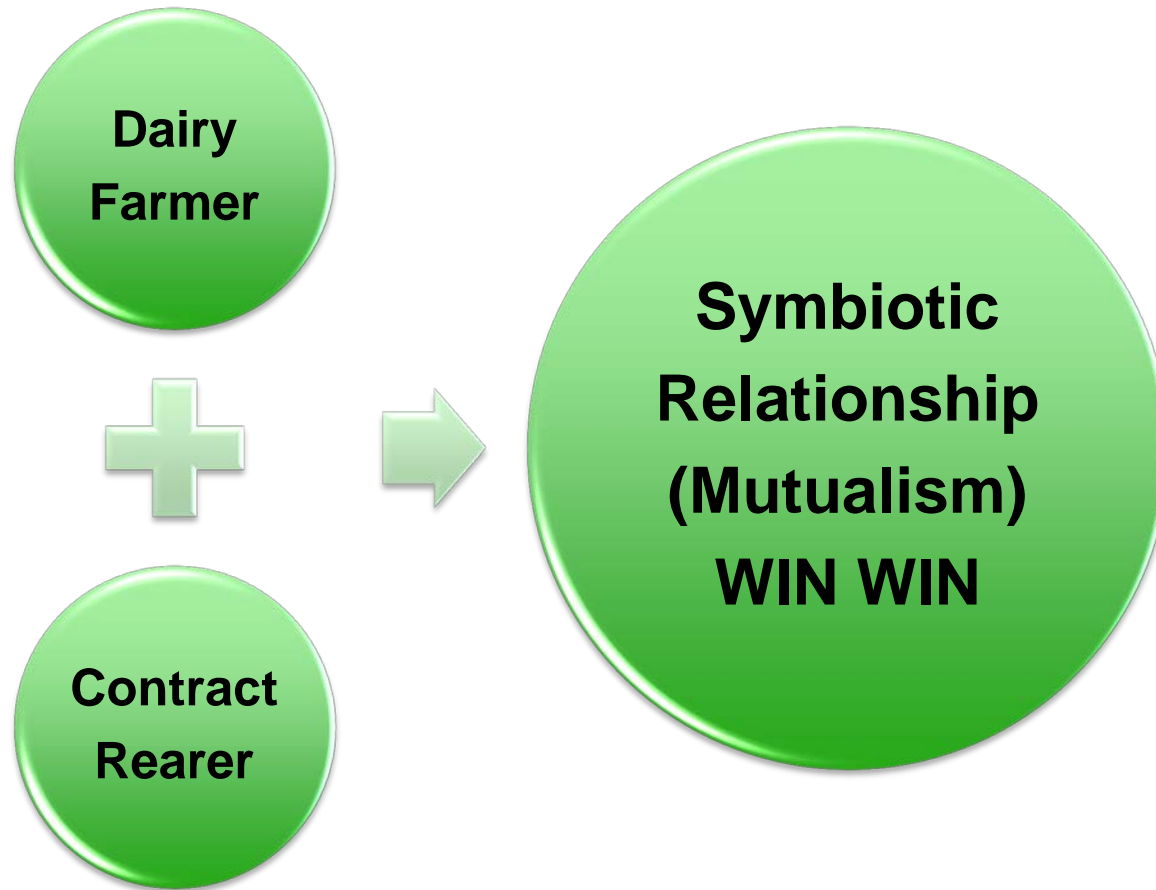


- Teagasc Advisers Specialists and Researchers



- Contract Rearing Discussion Groups

Contract Rearing



- Thank you
- Thanks to the members of the Sligo/Leitrim Contract Rearers Discussion Group for sharing their views and experiences