

Faster away...



...Herefords Pay!

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HEREFORD bulls sire stock that finish faster to leave more money on the bottom line say suckler herd owners James Kissick and son Graham in Co Antrim.

“Because we want cattle to keep the Kissicks, not the other way round, we switched to Herefords from continental bulls,” James asserted.

“Calves sired by Herefords finish as bull beef by 15 months instead of nearer 20 months when a continental sire runs with our Limousin and Simmental crossbred cows.

“That’s a huge saving on silage, grazing, bought in feed and every other overheads, not least our time. Cash flow has dramatically speeded up as Hereford genetics make calves far easier to finish compared to nearly pure continental animals needing many more months of costly feeding.

“As a huge added bonus, moving stock faster to the processing plant frees up extra grazing and housing for our cows. Especially as every Hereford sold from here is grading U or R at decent weights.”

Farming on the outskirts of Broughshane, a Co Antrim village famed for success in best kept competitions, the Kissicks decided that a change in breeding policy could lead to a simpler, more profitable system and bought two pedigree Hereford bulls.

Put to their 100 plus suckler cows the results have encouraged the Kissicks to move away from more extreme continental beef sires. Their one remaining British Blue bull will soon be replaced by another Hereford.

“All our calves are taken through to beef and Herefords are certainly producing the goods where it counts - in our farm accounts,” added James.

“The suckler cows are mainly Limousin and Simmental crossbreds though we are tending more towards the latter. Our local agricultural merchant, Sam Coleman at Glarryford, encouraged us to try the ‘modern’ Hereford so we bought bulls bred by John and William McMordie of the Solpoll



James Kissick moved with the times and uses the modern Hereford to produce heifers and bull beef in an area where commuter housing encroaches on farming operations

Herd at Ballygowan, Co Down and by Robin Irvine, Graceland Herefords, Whitecross, Co Armagh.

“The first thing we noticed was ease of calving and then the number of calves surviving and thriving with minimal intervention by us or the vet. Indeed our Hereford sired calves have a great track record health wise.”

Important, as James and Graham also farm rented land a few miles from home, a legacy of their change of enterprises and farmyard in recent years. Pigs were James Kissick’s abiding interest, but as the commuter village of Broughshane expanded it was clear housing for pigs and people make poor neighbours.

Eventually the pig unit closed and eight years ago the family sold their farmyard



Hereford sired beef bulls are always away ahead of continental progeny when it comes to producing profit and faster cash flow on the Ulster farm of James and Graham Kissick.

commented Graham. “Not only do stock perform better, but a huge amount of valuable time and money is saved,”

“Margins are tight in sucklers so we aim to maximise livestock performance, control costs and, of course, get the best possible return for stock sold.



James Kissick and son Graham enjoy working with Hereford sired calves with the temperament that makes good husbandry simpler and safer.

and some land adjacent to the village for development. The opportunity was then taken to move a few hundred metres up the road and invest in a new farmhouse with purpose built cattle accommodation and silos. Beef production having become their sole enterprise.

“Working with cattle around a yard build for the job makes life so much simpler,”

“Putting a native breed with size and thrive back onto crossbred continental cows really clicked for us. Not only are Hereford sired calves finishing to grade as well as those from continental sires, but they go to the plant with far less cost against them,” Graham revealed.

His father adding that, “When it comes to working with the Hereford again



The Kissick suckler herd grazing rented upland close to Slemish Mountain where St Patrick once worked as a herdsman!

after using continentals one soon sees why this breed is so popular in big beef countries such as Canada, the States, Argentina and Uruguay.

“The Hereford bull and his crossbred progeny have the temperament that makes working with cattle a pleasure and a great deal safer. Above all the Hereford is bred to turn grass into prime beef.

“All our heifers out of Hereford bulls are sold through the Certified Hereford beef scheme so we are getting an extra 16 to 20p a kilo from the Omagh Meats plant.

“As the Hereford scheme is only for steers and heifers the beef bulls are sold to two other local processing plants in Ballymena and Craigavon. Again the returns are pleasing, especially when we look at the lower cost and faster finishing. Our Hereford crosses can easily achieve an acceptable finish, fat class three, while the continental crosses were inclined to be much to heavy by the time they were adequately covered. With meat plants now discounting those heavier carcasses early maturity has real value”

As Graham and his father have found on their farm the modern Hereford has made amazing progress in recent years. Progress that can only gain pace as the Breed Society uses the world’s most advanced recording scheme, the Breedplan Performance Recording System developed in Australia.

Looking ahead it is clear the remaining continental sire running with the Kissick suckler herd, a British Blue, will be the last as Herefords have put them on the road to better returns. That mysterious myth that only a continental terminal sire produces U and R grades has been banished at Broughshane!

Hereford progeny - heifers, steers and bulls - finish faster for less cost and better returns. With EU 2012 CAP reforms looming, no wonder ever more suckler herd owners look at the real cost of production and turn to Herefords.

