

UNIT : THE BEEF COW – HERD REPLACEMENTS

STAFF

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Unit is to highlight the reasons for culling breeding cows and outlining the replacement opportunities that exist.

On completion of the Unit students will be able to determine a culling and replacement policy for a beef herd.

KEY WORDS

CULLING - cows that slip out of the herd's calving pattern, infertile and barren cows, cows with udder problems, cows which are under-performing, old cows

REPLACEMENTS - home-bred, purchased

SELECTION – soundness, temperament, breed, size, genetic merit – performance data and EBVs

RESOURCES

HCC (2007) Making the Most of your Suckler Cows

HCC (2008) Profitable Beef Breeding

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

The success of the beef herd depends on regular replacement of breeding cows as unproductive animals are culled due to infertility, lameness, mastitis, low milk yield or poor quality offspring. Although culled cows can provide a valuable income, an effective culling and herd replacement policy is essential to minimise the cost to herd profitability and herd replacement rate should be maintained at 17% or less annually on average.

INFORMATION SOURCES