

FEEDING HEIFERS

Once a heifer is growing well, she should be gaining close to 2 pounds a day. As we get into feeding growing heifers to prepare them for breeding, we must formulate a proper diet, often called a ration. Developing a heifer ration takes careful calculation and can vary depending on the variety of feedstuffs available and their quality. One key parameter to follow - ensure that the total feed intake (dry matter) does not exceed approximately 3% of her body weight. Also, a ration for a growing heifer should not exceed 50%

moisture, so limiting silage and supplementing her diet with dry hay is a good idea. Protein is extremely important in the diet of growing heifers to ensure adequate frame size, wither height, and growth. Avoid

short heifers by balancing the ration and including enough crude protein.

BRED HEIFERS

From the time a heifer is bred to 60 days prior to calving, the ration should be designed for growth and minimal fat deposition. Once she nears calving, a "pre-fresh" ration should be fed. This helps transition her to the diet she'll be receiving once she has calved and enters the milking herd. It will prepare her rumen microbe population, support the growing fetus, and support the heifer's growth and preparation to begin lactating. Heifers should weigh 55% of mature body at breeding and 85% of mature weight at calving.

During the last 60 days of gestation, a heifer needs to supply 75% of the calcium that her calf will have at birth. This proves how critical it is that a proper ration is calculated every step of the way to ensure the heifer and her calf's nutritional needs are met.

FEEDING LACTATING COWS

As you have already learned, a dairy cow's nutritional needs vary tremendously through her lifetime. This is where the assistance of a professional dairy nutritionist will prove helpful. At peak milk production, a cow may need 3 to 10 times as much protein and energy as she did during late gestation. The goal of any good dairy feeding program is to meet the cow's nutritional needs, minimize weight loss, and maintain health.

Feeding Program

Feed Type	Live Weight
Dairy Calf Starter Phase #1	Birth - 300lbs.
Dairy Calf Grower Phase #2	301-600lbs.
Dairy Heifer Developer Phase #3	600lbs - 30 days before calving
Dairy Cow Feed Phase #4	During Lactation



DAIRY FEEDING & MANAGING



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