

Shine Once a day out performs cows milk on top dairy farm

Two brothers who rear heifers as replacements for their dairy herd have recorded calf daily liveweight gains of 0.84kg after switching to Shine Once-a-Day milk replacer.

Centenary Thurles Co-op suppliers Jimmy and John Bourke, who run a herd of more than 250 cows at Rathcunikeen near Twomileborris, Co. Tipperary, last year reared their first batch of calves on cow's milk, fed twice a day.

They decided to feed the second and third batches with Shine Once-a-Day milk powder.

The second group increased daily liveweight gain (DLWG) from 0.51kg to 0.61kgs but what amazed the Bourkes most was the performance of the final batch, the group they usually find the most difficult to rear. The calves grew by 0.84kg/day through to weaning

The brothers, former Teagasc grass root farmers for North Tipperary, carefully follow guidelines set by the Irish advisory body. From birth, calves are fed a minimum of 2 litres of colostrum, always within the first hour. They receive a further 2 litres between 4 and 5 hours later.

Calves remain in individual pens and are fed 2.25 litres of cow's milk, both morning and evening, for 10 days.

From day 10 the calves are placed in batches of 8 or 9 and fed from a 10-teat feeder. Bull calves are sold locally within the first three weeks.

At day 21 the calves are sorted into batches of 30 and are often moved outside at this stage. Each batch has access to a homemade shelter, moved with a teleporter, which are invaluable to the system.

Until weaning at 100kg the calves are fed via a Power feeder which has the capacity to heat water or milk, mix milk and feed up to 50 calves.

The Bourkes use the 50-teat feeder to feed batches of 30 to 40 as they feel every calf 'gets a chance' to get its allotted volume of milk.

They had been close to installing a computerised feeder until a local farmer



(above) John and Jimmy Bourke and the Power feeder they use to rear their calves.



talked them out of it, insisting it would limit their ability to rear calves in batch sizes that suited their system. It would also tie up shed space for too long.

The brothers are adamant that even in a difficult rearing year the feeder, coupled with Shine Once-a-Day, delivered impressive results. John had the weights to back this up. Calves are weighed at approximately 4, 8 and 12 weeks. Due to the quota situation this spring the first batch of 30 reared were fed cow's milk only, in the morning and evening. The average DLWG birth to weaning was 0.51 kgs/head/day.

The second batch, again of 30 calves, were reared for half the period on cow's milk twice daily and the remainder on Shine Once-a-Day at 3.5 litres, once daily. The average daily gain achieved by this batch was 0.61kgs/head/day.

The final batch, this time 61 calves, were reared on Shine Once-a-Day only from day 18. These calves grew at 0.84 kgs/head/day.

"What truly amazed me was that the best growing calves were the latest born which was the direct opposite to other years. The only difference was Shine Once-

a-Day," says John.

The calves receive starter muesli from day 8. The calves are offered grass covers of 800-900 kgs and are continuously moved ahead of older heifers through the summer. They never stay longer than a week on an area of pasture. Calves consistently eat 1kg dry feed with Shine Once-a-Day but only 0.5-0.6kg when fed twice daily.

Jimmy and John's parents ran the home farm until mid-1995, milking 100 Friesian cows. A second farm at Newtown, Littleton, Co. Tipperary, was bought in the early 1990s and second dairy enterprise started on this farm in 1993.

The brothers formed a partnership in 2009 and currently milk more than 250 cows. The herd average is just over 7000 litres/cow.

Jimmy says he receives many texts and emails from farmers commenting on the excellent performance of his youngstock which are clearly visible from the M8.

The brothers are part of the Teagasc Grass Roots discussion group of farmers nationally and grow mono culture grass varieties for Teagasc to monitor suitability for North Tipperary.

For more information contact Tom Warren 086 3892327, Joe Murphy 087 2588394 or Bonanza Calf Nutrition 042 9336001