

REARING OF DAIRY HERD REPLACEMENTS AT PASTURE



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I. INTRODUCTION

Feeding and management of herd replacements are very important in dairy systems for a better animal performance, reproduction, health and welfare of cattle. **Rearing on the farm**, especially in those where **grazing could be the main source for feeding heifers**, should be based on achieving **high daily live-weight gains** from cows calved at two years.

II. OBJECTIVE To identify appropriated **grazing strategies** to apply in **dairy herd replacements** for achieving adequate **target growth rates** throughout the rearing period.

III. MATERIAL AND METHODS Spring calving Holstein Friesian heifers (n=39) grazing rotationally pastures of perennial ryegrass and white clover during the **grazing season** and supplemented with silage (grass and maize), when pasture production and/or sward quality was not the best to achieve desirable daily live-weight gains.

Measurements: - **Grassland management** (herbage mass, grass utilization, stocking rate and sward quality).

- **Heifers performance** (live-weight, body condition score, rump height and daily live-weight gains).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Pre- and post- grazing herbage mass: 2.372 and 995 kg DM/ha.

Grass utilization: 65%.

Stocking rate: 3.85 cow/ha.

Insemination age: 18 months.

Live-weight: 440 kg.

Body condition score: 2.86 (over 5).

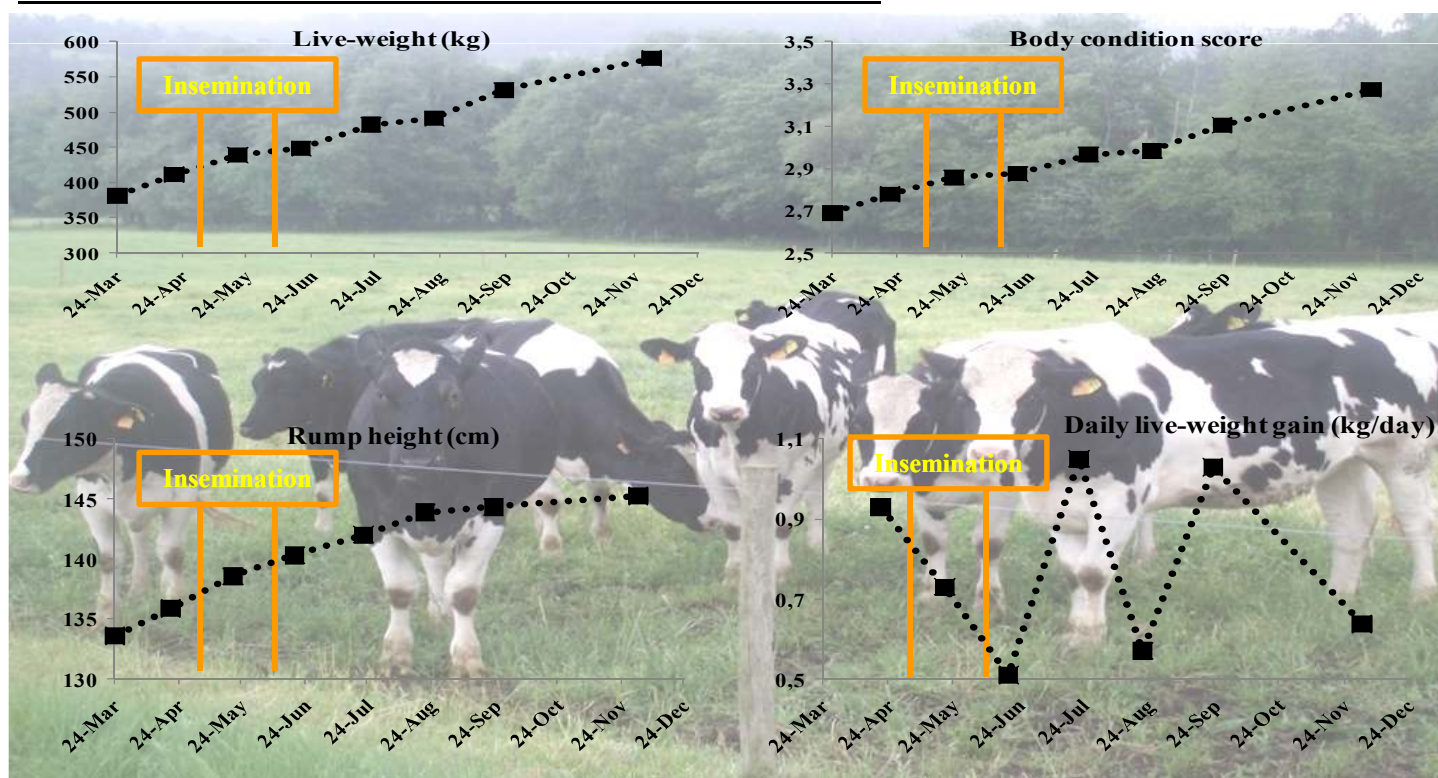
Rump height: 137 cm.

Daily live-weight gain: 0.77 kg/day.

Pregnancy success: 67%.

Calving age: 27 months.

Sward quality	DM (%)	OM (g/kg)	CP (g/kg)	ADF (g/kg)	NDF (g/kg)	WSC (g/kg)	OMD (%)	IVOMD (%)
I- vegetative (spring)	18.1	909	155	212	385	226	79.0	85.4
II- reproductive (summer)	19.5	924	98	266	454	244	76.8	84.8
III- vegetative (autumn)	13.6	886	183	294	449	97	72.6	77.8



V. CONCLUSIONS Increased reliance on grazed grass for dairy herd replacements might be a **successful strategy** to implement in Galician dairy farms to minimize costs. The effects of **grassland management** on heifers performance cannot be considered in isolation, as management **affects sward quality** throughout the season and **animal variables** (live-weight, body condition score, rump height and daily live-weight gains).

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