

PRE-CALVING SUPPLEMENT EASES CALVING ISSUES IN ARGYLL

Calving issues relating to BVD have been a historical problem on Duncan Macalister's Glenbarr Farms, near Campbeltown, Argyll. A vaccination programme is now in place, but he still felt that an extra boost was required for cows and calves at calving time.

A friend in the Borders recommended the Lifeline Pre-calver nutritional supplement and Duncan has seen a huge difference in both the ease of calving and the vigour of his new-born calves since he started buying it from West of Scotland merchants, Reid and Robertson, two years ago.

The fifth generation of Macalisters at Glenbarr Farms, Duncan has made a few changes to the 1800 acre LFA farm since he took over in 1993, including planting about 800 acres in Sitka spruce. The remainder of the farm is stocked with 140 Aberdeen Angus cross cows, 300 Blackface ewes and 300 cross ewes.

Since 2011 Glenbarr has been the Kintyre monitor farm for Quality Meat Scotland with the aim of improving farm business profit by close examination and trial of new ideas in key enterprises in the business. Duncan is especially keen that the three-year project will help him increase production from his cattle enterprise and find an ideal crossing cow which will out-winter, withstand the weather and produce a good calf every year.

Since buying in the BVD problem in the late 1990's, Duncan has kept his herd closed and screens for everything, vaccinating for both BVD and IBR. He uses high EBV Angus bulls on the Angus cross cows, however many of the cows are approaching pure now and he now feels an injection of hybrid vigour is required so has started using a Hereford bull to breed replacements.

Apart from replacement heifers, calves are all finished and sold deadweight to Scotbeef at Bridge of Allan, although the local village shop, Glenbarr Stores, buys approximately six finished cattle a year for retail in vacuum packs.

The cows are out-wintered on spring barley stubble near the shore, where they are fed silage and minerals, then, six weeks before calving, they are housed and fed silage with Rumenco's Lifeline Pre-calver crumb sprinkled on top. After calving in March, they are straight out to grass, which has usually started to grow by then.

Duncan said, "I would be buying mineral anyway so the extra cost of Lifeline Pre-calver is well worthwhile as the cows calve so easily. It is hard to describe how the calves just slip out and they are glistening and slimy. They are also up on their feet very quickly."

According to Rumenco Northern Area Manager, Lawrence Bec, the high levels of selenium and vitamin E in Lifeline ensure the new born gets the best possible start, whilst birthing problems are minimised for the mother. Cows are quick to give birth, with less incidence of retained placenta and body reserves are boosted to promote good conception in early lactation. Calves are quick to stand and show a strong desire to suckle, showing more vitality and a "will to live."

Duncan pointed out that his assisted calvings have halved since he started using it and that knowing they are going to calve easily gives him peace of mind. "A lot of products are a waste of time but Lifeline Pre-calver does exactly what it says on the tin!" he said.

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