

# Valuable Limousin calves from the dairy herd



**M**ike and Vera Fitzgerald run a 62-hectare dairy farmer at Ballywinterourke, Rathkeale, Co. Limerick. They have three daughters and one son. Colin is studying Agricultural Engineering in nearby Pallaskenry, Lisa is a National School teacher, Aimee is a Biomedical Engineer and Sarah is studying Nutrition and Health Science in CIT. Colin currently plans to travel to New Zealand and Australia before returning to farm full-time at home while continuing his interest in machinery.

Most of the farm is dry limestone land. The day before I visited it had rained all day, yet I could walk through the fields in my shoes! "We generally house the cows in mid-November and let them out towards the end of February.

The Fitzgerald's milk 130 spring calving cows. "We AI for 8-10 weeks and then leave the bulls to the cows. The majority of our cows are British Friesian X Holstein. The reason we use a Limousin bull is that the calves are more valuable. We sell the calves from home and have the same farmers returning every year. We keep some of the calves to sell as weanlings at Kilmallock mart. We have noticed in recent years that buyers are looking at the stars and 5\* heifers are making a premium price. We vaccinate the calves with long acting cydectin when there are around 100kg.

Our current Limousin bull is Cordarra Ian, his sire is Bonus and his calving figure is 5.3%. We purchased him in September 2014 from Michael Nohilly. We wanted a docile easy calving bull that also looked well so we were looking for one with a good back line and shape. Ian has proved to be easy calving. Gestation-wise he carries 2-3 days longer than our Angus bull."

When I visited the Fitzgerald farm Ian was in a field with a few cows. He definitely is not showing his age and looked better than many bulls I have seen on suckler farms! He also maintained his docility "Prior to purchasing Ian we were using Limousin AI, Limousin's are definitely more docile now"

The Fitzgerald's are very satisfied with their Limousin bull and plan to maintain a Limousin bull in their herd in the future.

