

Longevity and easy calving of Limousin the key for busy Louth based suckler farmer



Norman Bell runs a 115-acre family farm at Drumcar, Dunleer, Co. Louth. Married to Sharon they have three boys Craig, Nathan and Josh.

Three quarters of the land is extremely dry with the remainder very heavy. The dry land is surrounded by a beautiful stream. A lot of rain had fallen the day prior to my visit, however, most of the land was still very dry.

"I have 55 sucklers and finish everything to beef. The cows are mainly Limousin (I run a Limousin bull) with a few Simmentals, Blues and Charalois.

I brought my first Limousin bull from neighbor and kept him for a number of years, we never had any problem calving and he brought very good calves. I bought my current bull from Derek Russell in 2015." Townleyhall Kirk is by Mullary Intrepid out of a Ramses cow. Kirk was looking very well in his working clothes and looked like a bull that had just been bought at a sale with good muscle definition and conformation.

"The main reason we use a Limousin bull is due to calving ease and the quality of the calves. I do a bit of baling contracting and also some digger work and may not always be at home when the cows are

calving. Fortunately, the cows very seldom have any issues calving.

Most of the cows calve between February and April. I generally wean the calves in bunches of ten in October and November. We sell the bulls between 16-24 months and the heifers at 2 years old. "I sell to Euro Farm Foods in Duleek and Glanbia in Slane."

Norman showed me the factory details from nine bullocks he had recently sent to the factory. Two grade E, six graded U and one R. The weights were 389, 377, 429, 468, 517, 504, 400, 399 and 475 kgs. I feed for three to four months before sending to the factory. I start feeding 3-4kgs per head and up to 7-8kgs before finishing. I also feed spuds and some beet.

Thirty calves a mix of bulls and heifers are purchased each year mainly at the marts in Ardee,



Ballybay and Enniscorthy. Norman is focusing on producing beef from his cows and keeps some of the calves he purchases as replacements.

Norman is very conscious of herd health. He vaccinates his cows before calving with Rotavec Corona, and his calves for pneumonia with Bovipast

RSP. He used to vaccinate for BVD but stopped of late as it is not showing up via the ear tag test.

Norman cattle are showing great thrive and killing out well. He finds his Limousin bull crosses very well with his different breeds of cow. He hopes his current bull will last as long as his last one!