

Tightening up on calving patterns

THERE are still huge improvements to be made in terms of tightening up calving patterns in suckler herds, according to vet Joe Henry of Alnorthumbria Vets.

Mr Henry said the average beef farm in the UK was calving cows for six months.

He said: "We should be targeting a nine-week bulling period for cows and a six week period for heifers. The target should be to have 65 per cent calved within the first three weeks of calving."

He said a tighter calving period would make the cows and calves easier to manage. "It gives you even batches of calves for sale and vaccination and you can concentrate labour at busier times of the year."

While Mr Henry said the easiest way to tighten calving patterns was to take bulls out



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JOE HENRY

of the cows earlier, this would only work if fertility was good.

"Otherwise all you will end up with is a lot of empty cows," he said

Factors

He added improved fertility was down to a number of 'bull and cow factors'. "Know the health



status of your herd and choose your bulls carefully. Get your bulls checked by your vet and keep an eye on trace element levels, parasites and nutrition of both cows and bulls."

He advised carrying out a bull breeding soundness examination and either culling gen sub-fertile bulls or using them on smaller groups of cows.