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Winter daily live weight gain in females calves: effects on productive and reproductive parameters

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Winter daily weight gain (DLWG) is a good predictor of fertility in heifers that are first mated at 15 or 18 month old. The aim of this experiment was to evaluate two different winter DLWG in females calves and its effect on their performance. Twenty eight females calves (AAxHH) of 8m and weighing 158 ± 5.6 kg, were assigned to 2 treatments during winter (120d) to achieve low and moderate DLWG: (1) grazed *Lotus* Maku at a low forage allowance, 5% = 5 kg DM/100kg LW (LFA, n=14); (2) grazed *Lotus* Maku at a high forage allowance, 15% (HFA, n=14). Before and after the differential management, all animals grazed together L. Maku at 7%. Animals were weighed biweekly from 8 to 26m old. Hip height (HH) and Rump Fat Thickness (RFT) were measured at 8, 12, 15, 18 and 24 m. and presence of corpus luteum was assessed by ultrasonography at 12, 15, 18, 24 and 26 m. BW, HH and RFT were analyzed by repeated measures using the MIXED procedure with time as the repeated effect. Probability of cycling cows was fitted using the GENMOD procedure with the binomial distribution. Heifers DLWG during winter was -0.128 ± 0.03 and 0.140 ± 0.03 kg/a/d for LFA and HFA, respectively ($P < 0.001$). From 12 until 26m, heifers in LFA tended ($P = 0.06$) to present higher DLWG than those in HFA (0.534 vs. 0.495 kg/a/d). At 12m female calves in HFA weighed more ($P < 0.0001$) than those in LFA (183 ± 5.6 vs. 146 ± 5.6 kg), but no differences were found at 15, 18, 24 and 26m. HH was similar between heifers at 8 and 24 m, but HFA heifers had greater HH at 12, 15, and 18 m. RFT was greater in HFA only at 24 m (2.7 vs. 2.4 mm). No differences in ovarian cyclicity were found between heifers of both groups until 26 m when there was a higher probability ($P = 0.056$) of cycling heifers in HFA than in LFA (36 vs. 7%). Winter management of young female calves would affect their future productivity and reproductive performance.

The role of subsidies in beef cattle farms in SW Spain: a comparison of organic and extensive farms

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Livestock farming systems of the Spanish rangelands (dehesas) are traditional systems characteristic of the Iberian Peninsula where native herbaceous vegetation and evergreen species of *Quercus* provide the foundation for extensive beef farming enterprises. Dehesas are considered to be the most extensive, diverse, and low-intensity land use systems in Europe. Nevertheless, in the last twenty years, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has produced some important effects in these systems, specially an increase of the stocking rate. Although CAP policies contributed to stabilizing income in dehesa farms, they also produced a loss of sustainability. Nevertheless, EU subsidies have become a key element in these enterprises, accounting for as much as 30% of the farms' revenues. In recent years, many of these traditional beef farms have turned to organic production trying to take advantage both of new CAP subsidies and of new market trends. Theoretically, once these farms are organically certified, they can increase their profits by accessing niche markets with higher prices. Often things do not happen this way, and farms are forced to higher expenses on input purchases and greater reliance on subsidies if they want to remain in operation. In the present context, in which the maintenance of agricultural subsidies in their current state is not clear – though with some confidence a reduction can be expected in the medium term – these farms may face serious problems. Therefore, this paper examines the economic indicators of 90 conventional and organic dehesa beef farms in Extremadura (SW Spain), developing a comparative study. Specifically, the role of subsidies in both types of farms is reported, and strategies for the future proposed based on alternative CAP scenarios.