



Glenlivet Luings – A & J Nairn, Clashnoir, Braes of Glenlivet, Ballindalloch

Clashnoir lies on the snow line in the heart of Glenlivet, only 13 miles from the Lecht Ski Centre, and is home to one of the most upland and inland herds of Luings, alongside 1000 ewes. Alastair Nairn, together with his wife Jean and son Stuart farm a beef and sheep enterprise across 2000 acres of Crown Estate tenanted land, situated within the Cairngorm National Park, most of which is more than 1000 ft. above sea level.



The business has moved from traditional continental crossbred cows toward a pedigree herd of Luing females, after having purchased 10 Luing cows from Lord Lovat's dispersal a number of years ago. Their Charolais and Simmental sired calves had impressive hardiness and performance, which was the beginning of the journey with Luings. Following these initial cows, 8 pedigree cows with calves at foot were purchased in 2012, which were followed by a number of bulling

heifers. The pedigree herd now numbers about 130 breeding females with 40 heifers retained for bulling annually. Sire choices tend to be more mature bulls, rather than young bulls, whose progeny can be seen and will work straight away. Temperament and milk are very important characteristics when selecting sires, to ensure that their breeding female population is good natured and can wean heavy store calves. A few crossbred cows remain in the herd and the resulting Luing cross calves are as hardy and productive as the purebreds. A particular favourite cross is the Luing on a British Blue crossbred female which often results in bonnie roan calves.

Having kept all the heifers for breeding in recent years has allowed a tougher culling policy, and some breeding heifers are now available for sale, such as the 25 entered for the Spring Breeding Sale at Dingwall in May. The Luing herd numbers more than the continental crossbred herd did, because the Luing is capable of comfortably outwintering, with the majority also calving outside, freeing up shed space to accommodate young stock. Calving is later in the spring than lower ground units because of the harsh environment, but what is given in later calving is saved in straw, labour and vet expenses. Calves are weaned in February, after having been introduced to creep in November. Creep is used strategically to help alleviate the check at weaning, and also helps the dams to maintain condition, thus keeping the calving interval short and increasing the longevity of the cow herd. All male calves are kept entire, and what isn't kept for breeding are marketed at 15 months of age to ABP or Woodhead Bros. Heifers head straight back outside to grass at the end of May. The easy fleshing characteristics of the Luing makes it simple to finish male calves on a low input system, killing out at 350kg at a consistent R4L grade.

Luings

The Luing is an excellent fit in this environment and production system. Hardy outwintered breeding females with good longevity and fertility produce male calves that compete efficiently on a low input system, and added value heifers that can be marketed for breeding. Costs are minimised and the terrain is utilised to its best potential – win win.

