

Growth Measuring Tools



Monitoring growth

It's important to set growth targets for your farm, and regular measurement of your herd is essential. **Your heifers must be big enough at breeding time.**

Growth rates **cannot be determined by eye.** Weight should ideally be monitored by calibrated electronic scales or a weigh band. Skeletal growth (e.g. height at withers) can be monitored with a height stick.



Scale readings

Electronic scales are highly accurate and, when set up correctly in a race or crush, the easiest method.

- Set up the scales on a firm, level surface
- Use a known weight (e.g. a bag of milk powder) to test
- Calibrate regularly to maintain accuracy

* These aren't usually available on farm



Correct use of a weigh band

The Volac weigh band estimates live weight in kilos via measurement of heart girth. Accuracy is good due to the high correlation between weight and girth measurements.

- Restrain the animal securely and ensure her head is upright
- Place weigh band over her back just behind the front legs
- Pull weigh band under the belly using a reaching hook
- Align indicator with scale and read off weight
- Do not overtighten the band – just flatten the hair, then stop

Skeletal growth

Height at withers is a good indicator of skeletal growth – it helps avoid serving small, fat animals too soon. It is best measured using a height stick.

- Place the animal on a clean, firm, level surface
- Stand heifer with head upright
- Line up stick with back of foreleg – slide down crossbar and measure at highest point of withers

Consistent measuring

Whichever measuring method is preferred, if it's used consistently then benchmarking between batches and years is achievable, and their comparison valuable. Once you have an accurate measure of calf growth rates, nutrition can be adjusted accordingly and target growth rates achieved.

