

Foyle Food Group – Hilton Food Group Rubber Slat Project

The Foyle Food Group in conjunction with the Hilton Food Group carried out a trial comparing finishing cattle on [EasyFix](#) rubberised slats and concrete slats based on normal commercial farming conditions.

Objective:

The objective of this trial was two fold, 1) to obtain and use commercial production figures and establish the benefit of using [EasyFix](#) rubberised slats, and 2) to use the observations and experience of the trial producers to communicate the results to other producers.

Method:

- Three farmers with three different finishing systems – heifers, steers and young bulls participated in the trial.
- Approximately 300 cattle were weighed prior to the trial and weighted again prior to slaughter in order to establish a DLWG for each animal.
- Various aspects of finishing cattle were analysed, including daily live weight gain (DLWG), the cleanliness of the animal and welfare issues e.g. lameness.
- The farmers also observed and recorded any difference in cleanliness of the animals on each type of flooring and any incidence of lameness and the seriousness of each case.

The Results:

- Across all three farms the average DLWG from cattle on EasyFix rubber slats was **4.63%** better than those on concrete slats, showing an obvious commercial benefit for the animals housed on the [EasyFix](#) rubberised slats.
- Further analysis - Animals on the trial greater than 60 days had a DLWG difference of **5.61%** and greater than 90 days had a difference of **6.64%**.
- This demonstrates that the commercial benefit improves the longer the animal is housed on the [EasyFix](#) rubberised slats.

Experience and observations made by the trial farmers:

- Rubberised pens were $\frac{3}{4}$ covered. Farmers believed that this system provided a hard area to keep feet worn and also reduced the initial capital cost.
- Animals on the [EasyFix](#) rubberised slats had less lameness and sores on their feet. This is an important welfare issue, which will also reduce veterinary expenses and the time spent by farmers dealing with lameness.
- Animals were more lively, agile and content on the [EasyFix](#) rubberised slats, which reflected the difference in DLWG.
- No obvious difference in the cleanliness of the animals.
- Each farmer had a very positive experience with the [EasyFix](#) rubberised slats and the message is – try it out with one pen and see the benefits for yourself

The Project was sponsored by EasyFix.

