

A few years ago Robert Patterson's stock bull stopped working half way through the breeding season. There was no obvious explanation for it, and it resulted in a prolonged, spread out calving period with smaller calves at weaning and later calving cows.



*Robert pictured with some of the calves born in March 2018 from heifers that were synchronised and AI'd in June 2017.*

“Being a part-time farmer, time is precious so I needed to tighten up the calving pattern and I also wanted cows and heifers calving during early spring to get the most out of the grazing season. I thought synchronisation could be a way of giving me more control over when and at what age I calved my heifers down at. I decided therefore to try out this method.”

### **So what is synchronisation?**

Synchronisation of heifers is the process in which a group of potential breeding animals can be targeted and programmed artificially to come into heat and ovulate together and within a short time frame.

### **Benefits:**

- Batch calving
  - Suited to the part-time farmer.
  - Better control of planned service and scanning
  - A more even batch of calves to manage in terms of disbudding, tagging, grazing, weaning and housing.
  - Cost effective.
  - Can facilitate the use of AI to select sires best suited to individual heifers.
- Sets the replacements up with an initial calving time that can be maintained

Results can be variable so it is important to follow your vet's recommended protocol and to be aware of the factors which could affect herd fertility, namely; animal health (infectious diseases and trace elements) and animal nutrition; avoiding sudden changes in diet.

Robert's experience has been a success. Synchronisation has worked on his farm. The benefits of labour saving and better time management have been evident. He has gone from having a prolonged calving pattern to a condensed one with a more uniform batch of spring born calves that will be able to more efficiently utilise grazed grass.

Robert concluded, "After seeing and discussing the synchronisation of heifers it gave me the confidence that it was working at farm level and that it could be adopted on my farm. Without a doubt it was well worth doing and I'm happy with the outcome. As a result I intend to do to it again this year."

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