

## TWINS

High twinning rates lead to less profitable cows

A recent study on a 1350 cow commercial herd by a veterinary school faculty at the University of Tehran, Iran, studied the economic impact of twinning over a three year period. The study compared 180 twinings and 8 twin abortions to normal single pregnancies from 4052 calvings and 77 abortions.

Results as below

	Twins	Single
Length of pregnancy (days)	272	279
Abortion rate (%)	4.45	1.86
Retained placenta (%)	49.3	12.7
Calf mortality (%)	9.2	3.8
Immature calves (%)	3.8	1.1
First service pregnancy rate (%)	17	28
Average days open	130	113
Culling rate (%)	32.9	16.4
Milk production (kgs)	7134	8124

Taking all factors into consideration, the total cost for each twinning was estimated at £80 or health & fertility and £160 in milk - a cost of £240 per cow.

We know twins are a nuisance, but now we know the cost!

Recent work in the USA on twinning has come up with the following: Lactating cows have a high incidence of double ovulation (two follicles) at their first postpartum ovulation. This is not related to the level of milk production.

But, once cows are cycling normally, and have ovulated once, milk production exceeding 40 litres is associated with a massive jump in double ovulations.

This work says that cows giving over 40 litres/day at breeding are more likely to have twins.

The reason heifers have less twins is due to their lower milk yield. Interestingly, high yielding heifers had the same twinning percentage as their older counterparts.

So it's milk yield folks - according to our cousins over the water.

What can you do?

- Identify the high yielders at breeding
- PD those animals to evaluate for twins
- Be prepared for more problems at calving
- Adjust rations for pre calvers carrying twins as they need more energy
- Be aware twin carrying cows calve earlier than single calving cows.
- Ensure they have sufficient time in the pre calving group as body condition loss is greater
- Monitor those that have had twins to reduce postpartum problems

