



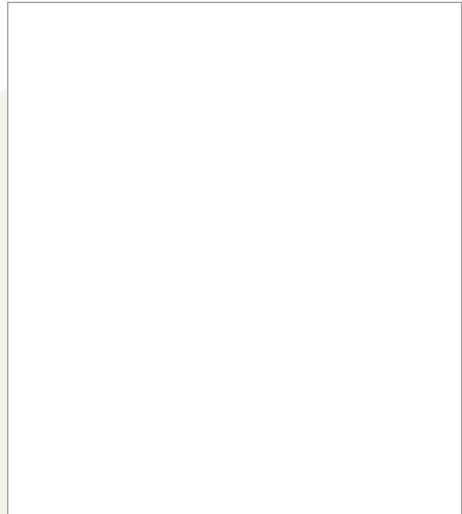
# Alternative Growth Paths for Finishing Cattle



*Is there a link between age*

different production systems at a wide variety of ages, generally from 12 to 36 months old.

Costs and animal performance levels can be very different across these systems and little is currently known about the effect that this wide diversity of slaughter age can have on meat eating quality.



Three batches of spring born Limousin crossbred cattle (each with 12 steers and 12 heifers) were allocated to three alternative growth paths at around 10 months old.

Alternative growth paths were:-

**Short duration**

months old on an intensive, indoor barley beef system.

**Medium duration**

26 months old following a second summer on good grassland.

**Long duration**

old following two summers on poor grassland.

Both summer grazing and winter housing growth periods for all cattle are being

After applying the different treatments to animals at 10 months of age, slaughter weights were heavier at older ages.

Beef eating quality is being assessed by a human taste panel at Bristol University.

each alternative growth path group await

was that costs increased as cattle aged. Beef eating quality results are still being examined.

There is currently no link between eating quality and sales value in the UK slaughter cattle market. Results from this project illustrating the links between age at slaughter and eating quality may stimulate stronger market focus on eating quality across the UK beef supply chain.

Any subsequent link between meat

alternative production systems, could

production across the UK.

**Project start date: [02/2013], finish date: 01/2016.**

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**For further info visit: [www.ahdb.org.uk](http://www.ahdb.org.uk)**

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For more information on farm business management, beef systems and nutrition contact your local consultant or SAC Consulting beef and sheep specialist at **[beefandsheep@sac.co.uk](mailto:beefandsheep@sac.co.uk)**