

Dairy Heifer Planning Budget

Using this planning budget, farmers raising dairy heifers may estimate their costs and returns for 2026. Table 1 presents estimates for dairy calves purchased at birth, bred and sold at 24 months in Missouri. Assumptions were based on price forecasts in October 2025. Inputs and feed requirements are summarized in Tables 2 and 3. Use the “Your estimate” column to plan your operation’s costs and returns for 2026.

Table 1. Missouri dairy heifer planning budget for 2026.

	Dollars per heifer sold	Your estimate
Income		
Springer heifer sales (0.95 head)	3,135.00	
Cull heifer sales (0.025 head)	46.15	
Yearling heifer sales (0.025 head)	29.91	
Less death loss (4%) of purchased calves	-33.75	
Total income	3,177.31	
Operating costs		
Purchased heifer calf and interest	863.64	
Feed (birth to 24 months of age)	1,084.03	
Labor	145.20	
Veterinary, drugs and supplies	40.00	
Breeding costs for artificial insemination services	25.00	
Transportation and marketing	10.00	
Utilities, fuel and oil	35.00	
Building and equipment repairs	23.50	
Miscellaneous	32.00	
Operating interest	50.12	
Total operating costs	2,328.50	
Ownership costs		
Depreciation on buildings and equipment	48.60	
Interest on buildings and equipment	37.48	
Insurance and taxes on buildings and equipment	14.35	
Total ownership costs	100.43	
Total costs¹	2,428.93	
Income over operating costs	848.81	
Income over total costs	748.37	

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

- Total cost per day per heifer sold = \$2.17.
Total cost per pound of gain per heifer sold = \$1.31.
Springer heifer break-even price per head = \$2,512.24.



Check out the complete collection of Missouri crop and livestock enterprise budgets at muext.us/MissouriAgBudgets

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Table 2. Input assumptions used in dairy heifer planning budget for 2026.

Selected input quantities	Quantity	Selected input prices	Dollars per unit
Cull heifer sale weight, pounds	1,300	Cull heifer sale price, per hundredweight	142.00
Yearling heifer sale weight, pounds	725	Yearling heifer sale price, per hundredweight	165.00
Labor, hours	6.6	Springer heifer sale price, per head	3,300.00
		Labor cost, per hour	22.00
		Heifer purchase price	750.00

Table 3. Feed requirements for dairy heifer planning budget for 2026.

Birth to 6 months (90 to 400 pounds)		Prewaning ration (90 to 180 pounds)		Transition ration (180 to 235 pounds)		Early growing ration (235 to 400 pounds)	
Feed description	Dollars per unit	Units	Dollars	Units	Dollars	Units	Dollars
Milk replacer, per pound	2.044	100	204.40				
Calf starter, per pound	0.242	100	24.20	100	24.20		
Alfalfa hay, per pound	0.125	20	2.50	90	11.25	225	28.13
Calf grower, per pound	0.195			50	9.73	450	87.53
Grass hay, per pound	0.045					225	10.13
Pasture, per animal unit month	26.00					0.4	10.62
Feed cost per period			231.10		45.18		136.39
Total feed costs¹			417.81				
6 to 12 months (400 to 725 pounds)		Winter ration		Spring/Fall ration		Summer ration	
Feed description	Dollars per unit	Units	Dollars	Units	Dollars	Units	Dollars
Corn gluten feed, per pound	0.108	525	56.83			270	29.23
Corn, cracked, per pound	0.085	387	33.03	252	21.51	234	19.97
Soybean hulls, per pound	0.063	263	16.41	360	22.50	270	16.88
Grass hay, per pound	0.045	1,350	60.75				
Mineral, per pound	0.500	36	18.00	36	18.00	36	18.00
Pasture, per animal unit month	26.00			1.1	29.25	1.7	43.88
Feed cost per period			185.02		91.26		127.95
Average total feed costs			247.75				
12 to 24 months (725 to 1,380 pounds)		Winter ration		Spring/Fall ration		Summer ration	
Feed description	Dollars per unit	Units	Dollars	Units	Dollars	Units	Dollars
Corn gluten feed, per pound	0.108	225	24.36			207	22.41
Corn, cracked, per pound	0.085	135	11.52	90	7.68	117	9.99
Soybean hulls, per pound	0.063	90	5.63	180	11.25	207	12.94
Grass hay, per pound	0.045	1,710	76.95				
Mineral, per pound	0.500	18	9.00	18	9.00	18	9.00
Pasture, per animal unit month	26.00			2.1	54.73	3.2	82.10
Feed cost per period			127.45		82.66		136.43
Average total feed costs²			418.48				

Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding. 1. Feed cost adjusted to account for death loss (4%). 2. Feed cost adjusted to account for sale of yearling heifers (2.5%).

Farmers can customize this budget using the [Missouri Dairy Budgets workbook \(XLSX\)](https://extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/dairy-budgets.xlsx) (extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgBusinessPolicyExtension/Docs/dairy-budgets.xlsx).



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