

Breeding Guidelines for Spring 2023*

EBI will continue to be the tool to deliver on the three pillars of on-farm sustainability



1. Know your herd's strengths and weaknesses. Refer to your ICBF Herd EBI Scorecard to help establish what these are (*see overleaf*).



2. Farmers should strongly consider using sexed semen to generate some or all of their dairy heifer calves for 2024. Plan to use at least two sexed semen straws to generate each dairy female required.



3. Ideally only consider females with an EBI of at least €150 for mating to high EBI dairy bulls (either sexed or conventional). All remaining females should be considered for mating to beef bulls with a high Dairy Beef Index (DBI) value from the start of the breeding season. If you will not achieve sufficient dairy replacements with this strategy, consider purchasing dairy female replacements. If purchasing replacements, identify genotyped females from high health status herds with an EBI of at least €200.



4. Select a team of high EBI AI bulls from the ICBF dairy active bull list to breed your dairy herd replacements. Use the team of bulls equally with no more than 15% of mating's to any individual bull to minimise genetic and fertility risks. For a typical 100 cow dairy herd, at least 8 bulls should be used, with no more than 15 straws (i.e., 15% mating's) to any individual bull.



5. Ensure that inseminations with sexed semen are completed in the first 3-weeks of the breeding season and prioritise usage on maiden heifers, younger cows, earlier calving cows, and cows without health issues. Use a large team of high EBI bulls to minimise genetic and fertility risks. Contact your AI technician in advance of using sexed semen, pay careful attention to AI procedures, and the optimum timing of AI for sexed semen is 14 to 20 h after the onset of standing heat.



6. To ensure saleable, profitable, and sustainable dairy-beef cattle are generated, use beef AI bulls from the ICBF Dairy-Beef Active bull list. It's recommended to firstly select bulls with a calving difficulty percentage range suitable for the females being mated (i.e., first calvers, second calvers, mature cows), and then select bulls with the highest Beef sub-index value.



7. Use the ICBF HerdPlus Sire Advice Tool. It will simplify the process of bull selection and identify the optimum mating for both dairy and beef bulls. The tool will allocate dairy bulls to cows based on their strengths & weaknesses, as well as manage inbreeding. The tool also identifies the optimum beef AI bull mating to minimise calving issues and maximise beef merit.



* These breeding guidelines have been developed by a DAFM-led dairy calf welfare working group, consisting of key industry stakeholders. Members of the working group include the following: DAFM, ICBF, Teagasc, National AI companies, IFA, ICMSA, ICOS, Dairy Industry Ireland, Meat Industry Ireland, Bord Bia and Animal Health Ireland.



ICBF Herd EBI Scorecard

Herd Owner:

Address:

Herd Number: Z2260646	Your Herd	National Average	National Top 10%	Your National Rank	Star Rating ¹
Herd EBI (285 out of 286 cows have an EBI and hence are included in your EBI scorecard. Note: where several cows are not included in your herd scorecard, the data presented for your herd may not truly reflect your herd genetic merit) ²	€154	€134	€173	78%	****
Milk Sub-Index (Milk, Fat & Protein)	€55	€42	€59	87%	*****
Fertility Sub-Index (Calving Interval & Survival)	€59	€62	€78	47%	***
Calving Sub-Index (Gestation, Calving Difficulty, Mortality)	€33	€28	€36	81%	*****
Beef Sub-Index (Carcass Weight, Conformation & Fat)	€-25	-€11	-€7	3%	*
Maintenance Sub-Index (Cow Liveweight)	€25	€13	€20	94%	***** ₃
Management Sub-Index (Milking speed & Temperament)	€5	€1	€3	97%	*****
Health Sub-Index (SCC, Mastitis, & Lameness)	€2	€4	€6	23%	**

¹ Star Rating: * = 1 - 20% ** = 21 - 40% *** = 41 - 60% **** = 61 - 80% ***** = 81 - 100%

² 204 cow(s) and 62 heifer(s) (born in 2021) have an EBI of at least €140, we suggest mating these to high EBI dairy bulls. We suggest mating all other females to beef bulls with a high Dairy Beef Index value (See Guidelines Point 2). Please refer to your ICBF EBI report to identify the EBI of each individual female. Contact the ICBF HerdPlus team for more information on 023-8820452.

³ Predicted liveweight of a mature Holstein-Friesian cow based on Star Rating:

* = 590 to 635 kg ** = 579 to 590 kg *** = 570 to 579 kg **** = 559 to 571 kg ***** = 487 to 558 kg