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DAIRY BEEF INDEX

A BREEDING INDEX TO ENSURE HIGH QUALITY CALVES TO INTEGRATE INTO OUR BEEF INDUSTRY.

Dairy farmers are advised to use high Dairy Beef Index (DBI) bulls to ensure saleable, profitable and sustainable dairy beef cattle. The Beef sub-index of the DBI is the key driver of the Commercial Beef Value (CBV) of future dairy x beef calves.
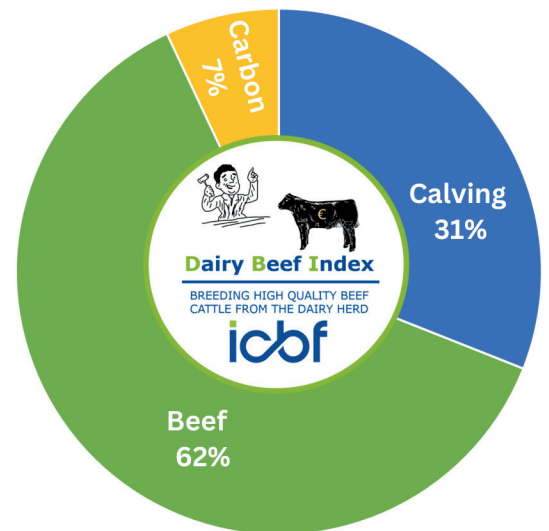
What is the DBI?

The Dairy Beef Index (DBI) is a breeding index for Irish beef and dairy farmers to promote high-quality beef cattle bred from the dairy herd. The aim of the DBI is to allow dairy farmers to easily identify beef bulls that are short gestation, easy calving, with a high carcass merit that will go on to produce high CBV calves. Calves with high CBV values perform well in calf-to-beef systems.

What does the DBI select for?

- Easy calving, short gestation and less calf mortality.
- Heavier carcasses with greater conformation and lower fat score.
- Cattle that are carbon efficient with less feed intake.

DBI vs CBV?

The DBI should be used when selecting beef bulls for breeding in the dairy herd. The CBV is a tool that gives farmers an insight into the genetic value of animals destined for beef production. **Essentially, the CBV is the DBI without the calving traits.** It is important that farmers focus on the DBI when making breeding decisions.

Carbon 7% · Calving 31% · Beef 62%

Dairy Beef Index
BREEDING HIGH QUALITY BEEF CATTLE FROM THE DAIRY HERD
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The best ranked sires on DBI deliver heavier, better conformed carcasses that have a greater chance of meeting factory specifications for conformation.

Check out the Dairy Beef Active Bull List for more information on the best DBI bulls available this Spring.

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Advice for Dairy Farmers

Maximise the genetic potential of your dairy herd by breeding your best stock to dairy AI. Generally, heifers are the most genetically elite animals in a herd; therefore, to maximise the genetic potential of their progeny, use dairy AI, not a beef bull. As well as later calving cows, lower EBI cows should be considered for beef matings, irrespective of whether they are bred early or later in the breeding season.

Consider the traits that make up a bull's DBI. On average, 49% of an animal's DBI will come from calving traits, while the remaining 51% will come from beef value traits. That said, where a bull is extremely good on a particular trait (e.g., calving difficulty), almost all its index could come from that trait. With that in mind, it's important to examine each of the key traits:

- **Calving Difficulty:** The expected incidence of calving difficulty acceptable for your herd and the females being mated. For example, a calving difficulty figure of 4% on dairy cows is expected to result in considerable assistance in 4 out of 100 dairy cow calvings. If you are mating cows, you should only consider the dairy cow calving difficulty figure, not the dairy heifer figure.
- **Gestation:** Shorter gestations are desirable. It is worthwhile to consider using longer gestation bulls early in the breeding season, provided they excel in other traits.
- **Carcass Merit:** Try to maximise carcass merit, by selecting bulls with the highest figures for carcass weight and conformation. **The higher the beef sub-index in the DBI of a bull, the higher the CBV of his future progeny.**

How can a dairy farmer breed dairy x beef calves that are 4* & 5* CBV?

There is large variation in the beef merit of calves even within breeds. ICBF research has shown that calves bred from higher genetic merit beef bulls have heavier carcass weights, better conformation and are more likely to meet factory specifications than calves bred from lower genetic merit beef bulls. As with all breeding indices, it is crucial to focus on the individual traits that make up the overall index. To ensure a saleable high CBV calf, farmers should focus on the beef traits within the DBI.

The table below outlines the minimum DBI Beef sub-index required for **Angus** and **Hereford** beef bulls to achieve a 4* or 5* CBV dairy-beef calf categorised by dairy animal ranking on EBI Beef sub-index.

Where to view the DBI?

- Animal Search
- Active Bull List
- Stockbull Finder
- Sales Catalogues

Dairy		Minimum DBI Beef Sub-Index required to produce a	
Rank on EBI Beef Sub-Index	EBI Beef Sub-Index Value	4 star CBV calf	5 star CBV calf
Bottom 20%	-€18	>€90	>€130
Bottom 40%	-€9	>€82	>€120
Average	-€5	>€78	>€116
Top 40%	-€2	>€75	>€113
Top 20%	€2	>€71	>€110