

Breeding Guidelines for Spring 2021*



1. Know your herd's strengths and weaknesses. Refer to your ICBF Herd EBI Scorecard to help establish what these are (*see overleaf*).
2. Select a team of high EBI AI bulls when breeding your dairy herd replacements. For a typical 100 cow dairy herd, a minimum of 8 bulls should be used on your herd, with no more than 15% mating's to any one bull.
3. Target high EBI females (typically maiden heifers, first and second calvers) to breed your next generation of dairy herd replacements. Lower EBI cows should be bred to beef AI from the start of the breeding season.
4. Use the Dairy Beef Index (DBI) to select suitable beef AI sires for your dairy herd. A team of bulls should be selected that suits the various dams in your herd (i.e., maiden heifers, young cows and mature cows) and the number of these that are selected for beef AI. Bulls with higher beef merit figures should be selected for older animals. Consider the use of vasectomised bulls in conjunction with beef AI as an alternative to beef stock bulls. Avoid using dairy 'sweeper' bulls.
5. Use the ICBF HerdPlus Sire Advice Tool to help manage your breeding program and simplify the process of sire selection. It will allocate your bulls to cows based on their strengths & weaknesses, as well as manage inbreeding. Cows designated for beef AI should be flagged to ensure that only the best animals are used to breed dairy herd replacements. For more information on this tool please speak to ICBF HerdPlus, your Teagasc Advisor and/or your AI company.
6. If using sexed semen, only use high EBI sires and ensure that all sexed semen inseminations occur early in the breeding season. Any inseminations with Jersey or crossbred bulls should be conducted using sexed semen only. Pay careful attention to straw handling and AI procedures, as sexed semen contain fewer sperm, and these sperm are more fragile after the sorting process.

* 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.