

Understanding Gestation Length EBVs

Gestation length can be defined as the period from the date of conception (ie. when the cow gets in calf) to when the subsequent calf is born. Shorter gestation length is generally associated with lighter birth weight, improved calving ease and improved re-breeding performance among dams. In addition, calves born with a shorter gestation length may be heavier at weaning due to more days of growth.

Interpreting Gestation Length EBVs

Gestation Length EBVs provide an estimate of genetic differences between animals in gestation length. Gestation Length EBVs are expressed in days.

Lower or more negative Gestation Length EBVs are considered to be more favourable. For example, a bull with a Gestation Length EBV of -2 days would be expected to produce calves that are born earlier, and more easily, than a bull with a Gestation Length EBV of $+2$ days.

Recording Information for Gestation Length

Gestation Length EBVs are calculated from both the joining date and date of birth records for calves conceived by either AI or Hand Mating.

Consequently, the information that needs to be recorded for the calculation of Gestation Length EBVs includes:

- ❑ the date of birth details for each calf
- ❑ the joining (or AI) date of any AI or Hand Mating joinings.

Both sets of information can be submitted to your Breed Society/Association when submitting your calf registration details. Please contact your Breed Society/Association should you have any queries about how to submit this information.

When recording gestation length, it is also important to note that:

- ❑ Gestation length information is currently excluded from the BREEDPLAN analysis if (a) the calf is an embryo transfer calf, (b) the calf is a twin, (c) only one animal is represented in a contemporary group, or (d) more than $2/3$ of animals in a contemporary group have the same gestation length.
- ❑ No information from natural matings is used in the calculation of Gestation Length EBVs. Although some natural matings may be observed, they are not currently used in the calculation of gestation length as there is no guarantee that the observed mating is the one that successfully results in the conception of the calf.

For more information regarding Gestation Length EBVs, please contact staff at BREEDPLAN.