

Calving Ease Index



Official Calving Ease Indexes are published for Holstein and Friesian sires to help dairy farmers make more informed breeding choices.

The indexes are expressed as 'percent Easy Calvings', on a scale of about -3 to +3 and are centred around a breed average of zero, with positive figures indicating that calvings are predicted to be easier than average and negative figures predicting more difficult calvings.

The two genetic indexes together give a complete picture of a bull's 'calving performance':

- **Direct Calving Ease (dCE %)** gives a prediction of the ease with which a calf by that sire will be born.
- **Maternal Calving Ease (mCE %)** predicts the ease with which a daughter of that sire will give birth.

Direct Calving Ease is likely to be of most interest in the first instance, and is naturally going to be important when breeding maiden heifers, where the use of negative dCE% should be avoided as these are predicted to give

a higher proportion of difficult calvings. However, dCE% shouldn't be ignored in older cow matings either, where it would always be wise to avoid bulls which are likely to produce very difficult calvings.

Attention should also be paid to Maternal Calving Ease, as long-term selection for dCE% without any regard to mCE% could set up problems for the future.

As part of a broader breeding strategy, it is recommended to select primarily for Profitable Lifetime Index (PLI) and using the Calving Ease Indexes - as well as other fitness traits - as secondary criteria, with careful judgement made on a case-by-case basis about their relative importance.

Both dCE and mCE Predicted Transmitting Abilities (PTAs) are incorporated into the UK's economic indexes; Profitable Lifetime Index (£PLI) and Spring Calving Index (£SCI).

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Further information

For more information on AHDB Dairy breeding and genetics, visit dairy.ahdb.org.uk/breeding or email breeding.evaluations@ahdb.org.uk

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