

BEEF

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Commercial Beef Value

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The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) has announced a new Commercial Beef Value (CBV), which is described as a new selection tool for farmers with non-breeding herds. It will have particular relevance to those farmers that are purchasing calves, weanlings and stores and bringing them through to finish.

What is CBV?

In the Eurostar Index we have a terminal index, which is made up of feed intake, calving traits, docility and carcass traits. Once the animal is presented for sale, the calving traits are of no significance to the purchaser, so the CBV just takes account of the feed intake, docility and carcass traits of carcass weight, conformation and fat.

The CBV will appear with an economic value in Euro but animals will also be ranked on a



The CBV is a new selection tool for farmers with non-breeding herds.

one- to five-star basis, with five stars being more desirable. Because of the variation in stock types three categories have been set up:

- suckler (beef dam and sire);
- dairy x beef (dairy dam x beef sire); and,
- dairy x dairy (dairy dam x dairy sire).

CBVs will not be available on pedigree beef males and females, dairy females and calved females.

Generally higher CBV values will mean better performance and higher carcass value, so based on the three categories outlined above, we would expect suckler progeny to have a higher CBV (€) compared to dairy x beef and dairy x dairy stock, but there will be a range within each category. If for example, we look to buy a Friesian bull calf and two are presented, one with a CBV of -€80 and another with a CBV of +€5, the calf with a value of +€5 has better beefing characteristics than the one at -€80, and should deliver €85 more than the calf with the lower value. The extra value will come as a result of possibly better

feed efficiency, carcass weight, conformation, etc. It certainly helps to determine the genetic potential of various calves, which can be very difficult to judge just by viewing them at two to three weeks old. In terms of rollout of the CBV, for those of you currently on ICBF Herdplus you can view the CBV of animals in your herd by logging in and going into 'View Profiles' and it will be listed under 'General'. Throughout 2022 it will feature in articles in the farming media, at farm walks, it will be displayed on mart boards, and the ICBF will continue to develop output reports. Over time we would obviously like to

Climate Actions for January

Plan spring fertiliser applications for tillage crops



Get your slurry analysed for nutrient content

Create a slurry spreading plan with your adviser to get the most from it



Get your nutrient management plan completed. It will be particularly important in 2022



Continue to spread lime, where you can



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increase the recording of sire details, especially on dairy cross calves, because correct parentage will be vital to establish an animal's CBV. Given the potential number of calves that will come from the dairy herd and end up being finished on beef farms, can the CBV be used to signal to dairy farmers what will deliver for beef farmers? The CBV clearly shows that not all Friesian calves are

the same nor are all dairy beef cross calves, and those that have the better genetics are worth more and will be more attractive to the purchaser. If used correctly the CBV will be a very useful tool for selecting beef animals across all categories but firstly we must understand it, begin to use it and signal its relevance to all elements of the supply chain.

Planning this spring

With increased input prices, it is vitally important that you take time to look at how these might impact your farm and how you could possibly mitigate against increased costs. Teagasc will offer possible solutions over the coming months and you

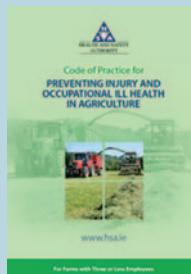
should consider which of those will be relevant to your own situation.

Having a conversation with your advisor to put a plan in place at this stage will be time well spent. Poor choices now will only compound things further down the line.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Prepare to cut risk

Research by Teagasc indicates that rushing and tiredness are major causal factors of farm workplace injuries, so good preparation is essential to cut risks. The coming weeks provide an opportunity for farm maintenance and making health and safety improvements before the busy spring season. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) has extended the Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Scheme II (TAMSII) into 2022, so longer-term measures can be planned. January is an ideal time to update your farm's risk assessment document. It is a legal requirement to



Complete your risk assessment document.

complete a risk assessment at least annually. This document will provide guidance to you to identify and remedy the full range of farm hazards and risks. Most importantly, where hazards and risks are identified – take action.

Finally, health is wealth and farmers have been found to have a lower health status than other occupational groups. The early part of the year is a great time to get a health check done and to consider taking on health-enhancing measures, e.g., diet, aerobic exercise.



RESEARCH UPDATE

Changing traits



E.G. O'RIORDAN, P. CORMICAN, M. MCGEE and P. CROSSON of AGRIP, Teagasc, Grange report on changes in steer and heifer slaughter age and carcass traits in the last decade.

The national steer and heifer slaughter data from 2011 to 2020 was examined to assess changes in animal slaughter age, carcass weight, conformation and fat scores. The annual dataset comprised approximately 240,000 steer and 245,000 heifer carcasses from the suckler herd, accounting for 42% and 64% of the annual steer and heifer kill, respectively. Three-quarters of the steer progeny were from late-maturing breed suckler cows bred to late-maturing (88%) or early-maturing (12%) sire breeds, and the remaining quarter were progeny from early-maturing breed suckler cows bred to late-maturing and early-maturing sire breeds. Likewise, suckler heifers were mainly (~90%) progeny from late-maturing sire breeds. Steer carcasses from the dairy herd were also included, with almost half (48%) of these from dairy cows bred to Holstein Friesian sires. A further 38% were bred to early-maturing sire breeds and the remainder (~14%) bred to late-maturing sire breeds. Additionally, ~140,000 heifers from the dairy herd, progeny from early-maturing (74%) and late-maturing

(26%) sire breeds, were also examined. Age at slaughter has decreased for all steer breed categories, by approximately one week per year over the past decade; however, the decline has slowed since 2017 (**Figure 1**). Steer carcass weight has, on average, changed little over the decade, but decreased for steers of dairy origin and increased for suckler-bred steers.

Concurrently, carcass fatness has decreased by approximately one-quarter of a fat score (15-point scale), while carcass conformation score has decreased by approximately one-fifth of a unit. However, within the breed types, carcass conformation has decreased for dairy-origin steers and remained static or increased for suckler-bred steers.

In contrast, heifer slaughter age has, on average, changed little over the 10 years (**Figure 2**), with a small increase for late-maturing genotypes. Heifer carcass weight has, on average, increased by ~2-3kg/annum and carcass fat score has increased slightly, whereas changes in carcass conformation score reflect that of steers.

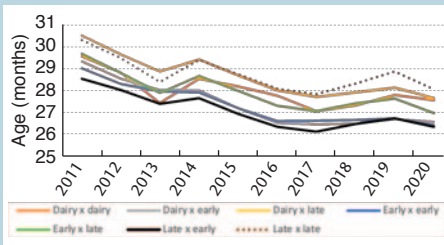


FIGURE 1: Steer age at slaughter (2011-2020).

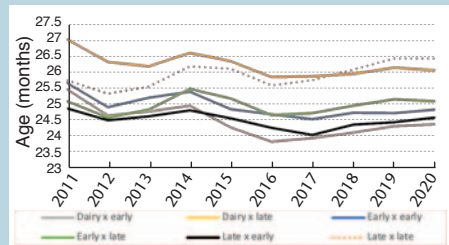


FIGURE 2: Heifer age at slaughter (2011-2020).