



Gestation Length ABV

A breeding tool to manage late calving cows

Key points

- The Gestation Length ABV identifies bulls and cows whose calves are born earlier than their expected due date.
- A shorter gestation means cows calve earlier and are in-milk for more days before re-joining. This gives them more time to recover after calving.
- Using the Gestation Length ABV on later calving cows is a way to tighten calving patterns.
- Every 1 ABV is about 1 day shorter gestation.



To reduce the gestation length of this mating, choose bulls with a Gestation Length ABV of less than 0 and the Good Bulls Guide logo.

Australian dairy farmers now have a breeding tool to manage late calving cows.

Launched in April 2020, the Gestation Length Australian Breeding Value (ABV) identifies bulls and cows whose calves are born earlier than their expected due date.

Shortening the gestation length of a cow, or group of late calving cows, can help tighten a calving pattern. A tight calving pattern enables pasture growth to better match herd feed requirements. Earlier calving means cows are in-milk for more days before re-joining. This gives them more time to recover after calving and get back in calf sooner.

Gestation Length ABV

The Gestation Length ABV is expressed as the number of days of gestation more, or less, than an average of 0. Bulls and cows with a Gestation Length ABV of less than 0 have a shorter Gestation Length than the average. One ABV unit represents about 1 day shorter gestation. As half the genes come from the bull, a bull with a Gestation Length ABV of -8 would have calves that are expected to be born 4 days earlier than the due date.

The reliability of an ABV is a measure of confidence. The Gestation Length ABV has a reliability of about 70% for bulls in the Good Bulls Guide, which is similar to other health traits such as Cell Count. For bulls with 100 progeny, the reliability is about 90%. Genomics and progeny performance data contribute to reliability. Like

all ABVs, the reliability of the Gestation Length ABV will improve as more data becomes available.

Breeding for gestation length

The genetic influence on the number of days a cow carries her calf is through her genes and the genes of the bull she is mated to.,

To reduce the Gestation Length of a mating, select bulls with a Gestation Length ABV of less than 0. Zero is the industry average. If breeding herd replacements using the Gestation Length ABV, choose bulls which also have a high BPI and the Good Bulls Guide logo.

Genomic testing of females can give an insight into their ABVs for gestation length.

Acknowledgment

The Gestation Length ABV was developed by DairyBio, a joint initiative between Agriculture Victoria, Dairy Australia and the Gardiner Dairy Foundation. We also thank farmers and software providers who supply data used in genetic evaluations.

More information

[Technote: Gestation length ABV](#)

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March 2020