

# Preparing for Breeding Success

Edition 1

Spring Management Series 2025



## Preparing for the Breeding Season ahead

With the calving season fast approaching or already kicked into gear on farm, there are a couple of key decisions to be made on farm to ensure you are best prepared for the breeding season that follows;

- 1) **Bull Selection**
- 2) **Calving Season Records**

### Bull Selection

When selecting bulls this spring, a bull team average as outlined here is vital to ensure a high level of genetic gain within the herd.

Sub index	Team average
<b>EBI</b>	€300+
<b>Fertility</b>	€120+
<b>Milk/Production</b>	€100+
<b>Health</b>	€5+
<b>Carbon</b>	Positive
<b>Kg's Fat &amp; Protein</b>	30kg+
<b>PD Fat %</b>	0.28%+
<b>PD Protein %</b>	0.18%+

- ▶ Ensuring the **Fertility** sub-index is above €120 will give the heifers an increased chance of being retained in the herd for 6 lactations +, while remaining within the first six weeks of calving.
- ▶ Ensure the **Milk/Production** sub-index is maximised through excellent Protein % (0.18%) & Butterfat % (0.28%) PTAs, this will drive lifetime performance of the herd, through higher levels of milk solids.
- ▶ Having a high **Health** sub-index will help reduce the incidences of lameness in the herd, while also reducing the herds SCC and increasing the herds level of resistance to TB.
- ▶ A positive **Carbon** sub-index will reduce the overall emissions produced by the herd.
- ▶ Combined **Kg's of Fat and Protein** of above 30Kg will ensure high levels of Kg MS delivered from the herd each year.

## Sexed Semen or Conventional

Sexed semen should be used in herds with good fertility performance to produce the replacement stock off the best heifers / cows in the herd - while also improving the quality of the calves for beef production by using high beef merit AI bulls on the remaining animals. If the herd is not achieving a <375 day Calving Interval (C.I) and 75% + six week calving rate, it is recommended that conventional semen is used.

Sexed semen should be targeted firstly on your replacement heifers, as this group of animals should be the most genetically advanced animals in the herd. When selecting cows for the use of sexed semen, it is important to select young cows (Parity 1-4), that are over 50 days in milk, in the correct Body Condition Score (BCS) of 3.0, and are free from uterine infection, and cycling regularly before mating start date (MSD).

## Calving Season Records

In preparation for this breeding season, keeping good records of problem cows from the calving season is key to high submission and conception rates.

Problem cows can be described as any cow that had a difficult calving, twins, retained placentas, milk fever, ketosis, mastitis, lameness, or were below target BCS.

Excellent records will allow these cows to be examined by your vet prior to the commencement of the breeding season.

Note, although some of these "Problem Cows" may be cycling during pre-breeding, they are at a higher risk of having a uterine infection, therefore reducing their conception rates.

**Stay safe and well as we move through Spring. If you need any advice or assistance, we welcome hearing from you.**