Extended lactation

November 2025

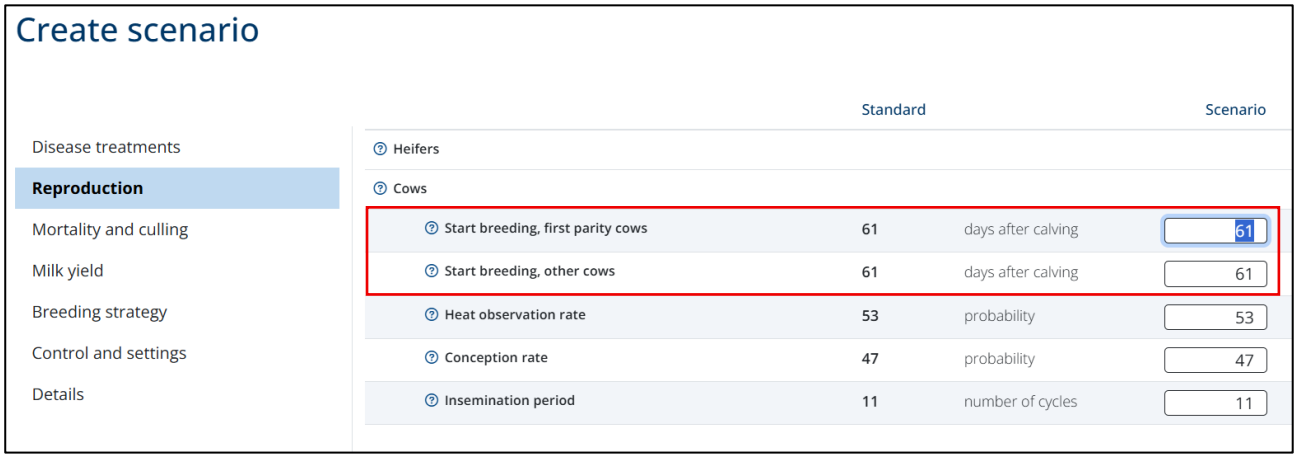
Extended lactation can be practiced in different ways. It can be beneficial in terms of fewer heifers needed for replacement, which in turn reduce feeding costs and herd methane emissions. Fewer young stock will reduce the stocking rate and may release building capacity that can be used for other herd improvements. Reducing the number of calvings increases cow longevity, as fewer cows throughout the year will be at risk of diseases related to calving and early lactation (e.g., Lehmann 2016).

The economic benefit (or loss) of extended differs between individual herds and is also depending on the milk price versus the feeding costs and costs of raising heifers.

Step 1: create herd and scenario

Create your own herd or choose a template.

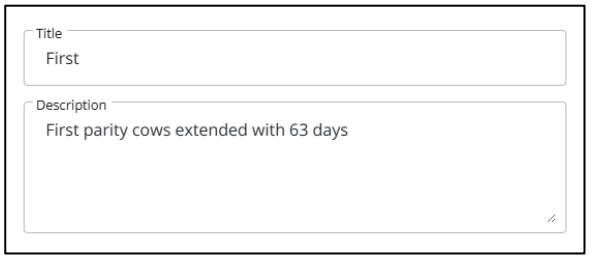
Create a new scenario and choose “Reproduction”. Find the parameters “Start breeding, first parity cows” and “Start breeding, other cows” as shown below. Those are the parameters we will be working with in the next steps.



Step 2: extend only first parity cows

Increase the start breeding for first parity cows with 3 reproductive cycles (3 x 21 days). In the above example the input value for this scenario would be 61 + 3 x 21 days = 124 days.

Create the scenario and give it a short recognizable name and a clear description of the scenario. Example below:



Step 3: extend only older cows

Create another scenario, where you increase the start breeding for older cows with 3 reproductive cycles (3 x 21 days). Like you did in step 2 for first parity cows.

Create the scenario and give it a short recognizable name and a clear description of the scenario.

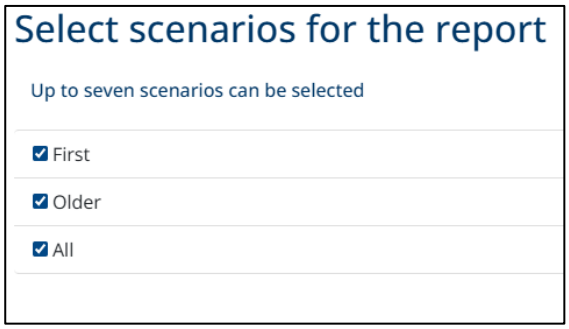
Step 4: extend all cows

Create a third scenario, where you increase the start breeding for all the cows, i.e. increase input in both parameters.

Create the scenario and give it a short recognizable name and a clear description of the scenario.

Step 5: create a report and compare the scenarios

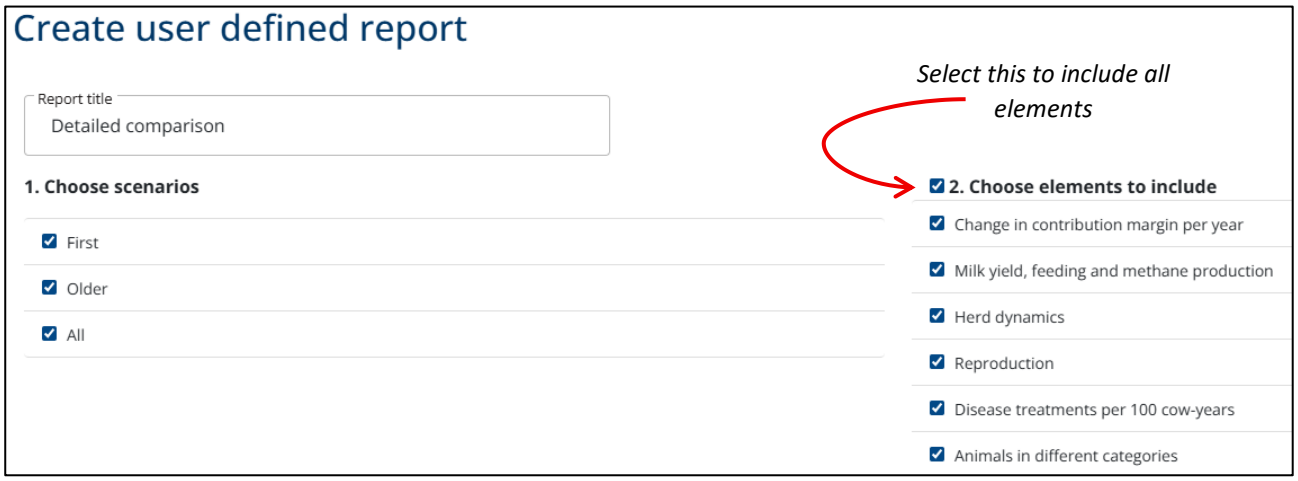
Create a report and choose “PDF-Health”. Select the three scenarios you’ve created (as shown below) and wait a few moments to receive the pdf report in your e-mail inbox.



Step 6 (optional): detailed comparison

You can make a more detailed comparison if the information in the pdf report is insufficient.

Click “create report” again and choose “user defined”. Select your three scenarios again and choose the elements to include as below.



References:

Lehmann, J. O., Fadel, J. G., Mogensen, L., Kristensen, T., Gaillard, C., & Kebreab, E. (2016). Effect of calving interval and parity on milk yield per feeding day in Danish commercial dairy herds. *Journal of dairy science*, *99*(1), 621-633.