

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.

Create scenario

	Standard	Scenario
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Disease treatments Heifers </div>		
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Reproduction Cows </div>		
Mortality and culling		
Milk yield		
Breeding strategy		
Control and settings		
Details		
	61	61
	61	61
	53	53
	47	47
	11	11

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 $61 + 3 \times 21 \text{ days} = 124 \text{ days}$.

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

Title
First

Description
First parity cows extended with 63 days

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.

Select scenarios for the report

Up to seven scenarios can be selected

- First
- Older
- All

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.

Create user defined report

Report title
Detailed comparison

1. Choose scenarios

- First
- Older
- All

Select this to include all elements

2. Choose elements to include

- Change in contribution margin per year
- Milk yield, feeding and methane production
- Herd dynamics
- Reproduction
- Disease treatments per 100 cow-years
- Animals in different categories

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.