

Calving Ease Direct (CED) EPD

I get many questions about the CED EPD, and its application. Here are two common scenarios that help demonstrate how CED EPD can help you in your bull selection.

Scenario 1: I am looking for a bull to breed my mature cows. My cows weigh 1200 pounds. I have narrowed my choices down to three bulls listed below. I have a town job, and don't want calving difficulty. Which bull is best, assuming all other factors are the same?

Bull A: CED -2

Bull B: CED +2

Bull C: CED +12

Landi's answer: Unless you have had a history of small pelvics or calving difficulty, don't let the difference in CED affect your choice of bull for mating to mature cows. Why? CED EPD is a measure of calving ease with first calf heifers only. This EPD has been calculated using only data from first calf heifers, thus it is NOT a good predictor of calving ease in mature cows. Knowing only the above mentioned data, I would not be afraid to use any of these three bulls on mature cows. Using the CED EPD as a selection tool for breeding mature cows could actually hurt your bottom line—for example, Bull A or B might add 50 pounds more weaning weight to his calves than Bull C, yet provide the exact same calving ease when bred to mature cows.

Scenario 2: I'm looking for a bull to breed my 15 heifers. Calving ease is my first priority. I have narrowed my choices down to four bulls. Which bull is best?

Bull A: CED -5

Bull B: CED +6

Bull C: CED +7

Bull D: CED +12

Landi's Answer: If calving ease is your first priority, the CED EPD would tell us that Bull D has the greatest odds of producing calves born with the least calving difficulty. In theory, Bull D should produce 5% more unassisted births than Bull C ($12 - 7 = 5$), and 17% more unassisted births than Bull A ($12 - -5 = 17$). In other words, if you bred 100 heifers to Bull A and 100 similar heifers to Bull D, one would expect 17 more heifers bred to Bull A to need assistance giving birth compared to Bull D. Thus, Bull D easily wins this challenge. I generally recommend bulls with a +6 or higher for use on heifers.