

Considerations when Selecting Replacement Beef Heifers



Does the heifer's birth date fit your production system?

Producer Tip

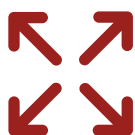
Early born heifers are more likely to calve earlier throughout their lifetime.



Do the heifer's genetics align with your production goals (e.g., calving ease, fertility, balanced growth)?



Is the heifer structurally sound (e.g., feet, legs, udder development)?



Does the heifer's frame size fit your production environment and feed resources?



Does the heifer have an acceptable temperament?

Producer Tip

Culling heifers with bad dispositions will improve the ease of herd management and producer safety.



How does the heifer rank compared to her peers based on your breeding goals (e.g., birth weight, weaning weight)?

Producer Tip

Optimally, bred heifers calve around two years of age, which means they need to be cycling by 11-14 months. Aim for heifers to be 55-65% of mature weight at breeding.



Does the heifer meet your herd health standards?

Producer Tip

Implement vaccination protocols and disease prevention strategies in consultation with a veterinarian.



Does the heifer's dam have proven reproductive and production record performance?



A replacement heifer will impact a beef herd's longevity and productivity. Below are criteria to consider when selecting heifers. Note: these are guidelines only, and replacement heifer selection should be tailored to your operation's specific goals and production system.

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Checkpoint #1 Birth

Birth date: Prioritize heifers born in the first 21 days of the calving season.

Calving ease: Prioritize heifers born unassisted.

Consider adding a cull or feeder tag for heifer calves born late or born from cows that have poor udders, that wean below-average calves or that have required calving assistance.

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Checkpoint #2 Weaning

Soundness: Evaluate feet and leg structure as well as body size and balance.

Temperament: A calm temperament improves animal handling, conception rates and longevity.

Health status: Cull heifers that don't meet herd health standards.

Genetic merit: Consider genomic testing for candidate replacement heifers. If genomic testing is not performed, base genetic merit considerations on the heifer's sire and dam.

Dam performance and records: Evaluate dam history of calving ease, production records, udder quality and structural soundness.

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Checkpoint #3 Pre-breeding

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Weight and growth targets: Emphasize balanced growth. Heifers should reach 55-65% of mature body weight by breeding.

Pelvic examination: Consider having your veterinarian palpate candidate heifers to evaluate reproductive tract development and pelvic measurement.

Herd health standards: Develop a vaccination program assisted by your veterinarian.

Temperament: Consider culling aggressive or nervous heifers.

Puberty: Identify and cull heifers with delayed puberty.

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Checkpoint #4 Pregnancy checking

Cull all open heifers.

Date of conception: Favour heifers bred early in the breeding season.