Tip Tuesday!

DRMS Updates Gestation Lengths to Improve To-Dry and To-Calve Dates on DHI Reports

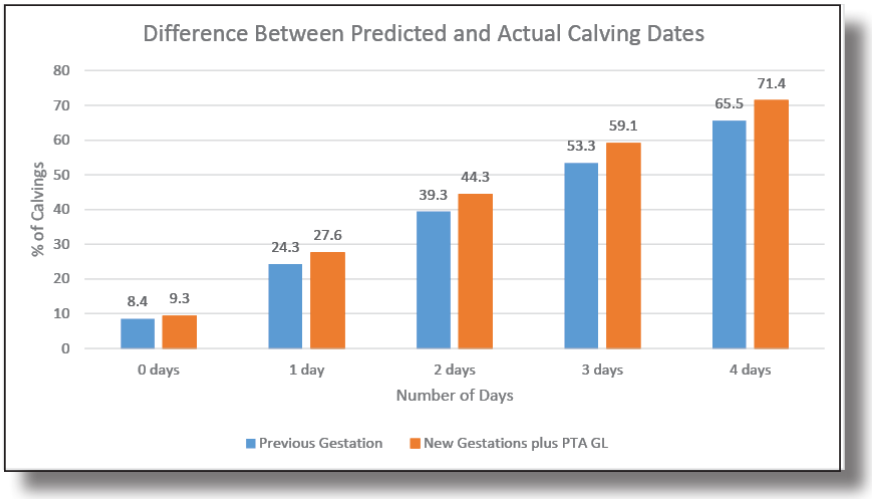
Proper gestation length (length of pregnancy) is critically important to producers – and is deployed throughout software for DHI processing and herd management.

Gestation length is integral to predicting due dates for bred cows and heifers. Secondary uses of due dates include accurately projecting herd inventories and requirements for parlor and barn capacity.

Current gestation lengths for dairy breeds were established almost 30 years ago. However, changes in both genetics and herd management have reduced gestation lengths.

DRMS used data from more than 2.3 million calvings from breedings after January 1, 2020 to develop new gestation lengths. New DRMS gestation lengths take into account cow's breed, service sire's breed and are adjusted for PTA Gestation Length (PTA GL) of the cow and the service sire (when values were available).

One important role of herd management software is to provide accurate projected due dates. The graph shows the difference between predicted and actual calving dates for the previous and the new DRMS methods. There is a sharp reduction in the percent of cows calving early. With the previous gestation predictions, 70% of cows calved earlier and 30% later compared to the projected due date. With the new gestation predictions, this distribution is 50% to 50% - showing the balance one would expect.



Summary:

DRMS improved its predictions of due dates and dry dates in DHIA processing and reports beginning October 10, 2025 and in Dart 8.7 software. These improvements will help producers make better decisions with more accurate projections of cows to calve, cows to dry and herd inventories.