

Select Fertile Heifers

by **TROY SMITH**, *field editor*

Dave Patterson laments the fact that so many cow-calf producers “leave technology on the shelf.” He recognizes

the wisdom in taking a cautious approach to new ideas and unproven practices, but the University of Missouri animal scientist wonders why so many cow-calf producers remain skeptical of decades-old

technologies backed by ample research and practical application.

During last fall’s Angus Convention in Fort Worth, Texas, Patterson addressed an audience gathered for a series of

Angus University workshops focused on maternal value. Drawing from his experience as leader of the Show-Me-Select Replacement Heifer Program, Patterson discussed technologies available to aid selection of fertile replacement heifers that will contribute to the long-term productivity of the breeding herd.

Patterson emphasized that heifers born early in the calving season have a reproductive advantage that extends far beyond their first pregnancy. Age, coupled with development based on sound postweaning nutrition, puts heifers in better position to conceive early in their first breeding season and subsequently deliver their first calves early in the calving season. Plus, the sequence of early breeding followed by early calving is repeatable.

“Early-born heifers are more likely to calve early, year after year. They have been shown to stay in the breeding herd longer, producing more and heavier calves, so they wean more total pounds of calf during their productive lifetimes,” explained Patterson.

In Patterson’s opinion, development to optimum target weight, reproductive tract scores (RTS) and pelvic measurement are underutilized technologies that contribute to selection of fertile replacement heifers. He emphasized the value of the RTS system designed to estimate pubertal status, through rectal palpation of the uterine horns and ovaries. Sexual maturity is then numerically scored from 1 (immature) to 5 (cycling).

“Reproductive tract scores are the best predictor of heifer fertility, and age has a strong effect on how heifers score,” stated Patterson, noting also the relationship between RTS and pelvic area.

“It’s not just about ‘bigger is better,’” warned Patterson. “Heifers having scores of 4 and 5, but pelvic areas under 15 square centimeters, aren’t going to make it.”

Patterson suggested that tract scoring and pelvic measurement be performed at the same time, as is the procedure for the Show-Me-Select program. The appropriate time is four to six weeks prior to breeding, or two weeks before initiating an estrous synchronization protocol.

Reviewing the Show-Me-Select program’s history, Patterson explained how some 137,000 heifers have been enrolled since the program began in 1996, but just more than 33,000 heifers qualified to be marketed through the program’s sales.

“Far fewer heifers made it than were enrolled,” stated Patterson. “That’s the idea. Some heifers aren’t meant to be replacements.”



Editor’s Note: Troy Smith is a freelance writer and cattleman from Sargent, Neb. This article is part of Angus Media’s coverage of the 2017 Angus Convention available online at www.angus.org/Media/News/AngusConvention.aspx.

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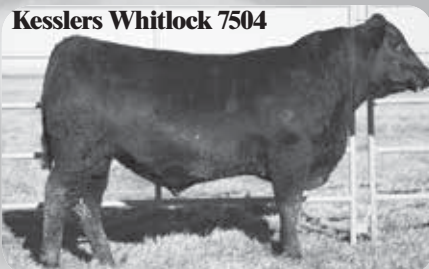
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CED +13; BW -.7; WW +51; YW +94; CW +26; Marb +.74;
RE +.61; \$W +55.22; \$B +110.14

Kesslers Whitlock 7504



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Sire: S Whitlock 179 • MGS: Connealy Final Product
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RE +.75; \$W +78.25; \$B +135.30

Kesslers 100 X 7523



Reg. No. 18881620
Sire: Kesslers 100 X 3520 • MGS: TC Aberdeen 759
CED +5; BW +.8; WW +52; YW +94; CW +34; Marb +.25;
RE +.62; \$W +46.34; \$B +111.74

Kesslers Reserve 7530



Reg. No. 18881694
Sire: VAR Reserve 1111 • MGS: HARB Pendleton 765
CED +7; BW +.5; WW +59; YW +92; CW +36; Marb +.79;
RE +.63; \$W +57.22; \$B +138.02

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Reg. No. 18881625
Sire: Baldrige Breakthrough A091 • MGS: AAR Ten X 7008 SA
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RE +.72; \$W +69.44; \$B +169.23

Kesslers Recharge 7616



Reg. No. 18881649
Sire: SAV Recharge 3436 • MGS: Connealy Lead On
CED -4; BW +4.7; WW +76; YW +135; CW +63; Marb +.32;
RE +.76; \$W +72.64; \$B +155.78

Kesslers Ten X 7618



Reg. No. 18881650
Sire: AAR Ten X 7008 SA • MGS: Kesslers Frontman R001
CED +6; BW +1.5; WW +64; YW +118; CW +39; Marb +.77;
RE +.37; \$W +65.42; \$B +142.94

Kesslers Black Granite 7624



Reg. No. 18881653
Sire: Connealy Black Granite • MGS: AAR Ten X 7008 SA
CED +8; BW +2.9; WW +77; YW +137; CW +68; Marb +.59;
RE +.66; \$W +76.13; \$B +178.91

Kesslers Black Granite 7652



Reg. No. 18881663
Sire: Connealy Black Granite • MGS: Kesslers Frontman R001
CED +12; BW +.3; WW +58; YW +94; CW +39; Marb +.56;
RE +.46; \$W +71.13; \$B +133.13

EPDs as of 12/13/17

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