

Find your balance



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When things are out of balance, life just isn't comfortable. Just ask JoJo, our family dog. Doc diagnosed his condition as idiopathic vestibular disease (IVD), or old dog syndrome. It presents like an inner ear infection, causing a loss of balance and feeling of motion sickness.

Poor JoJo was at first tracking like a drunken sailor. The eye twitches and the instant drop-and-rolls were a little unnerving for me, and JoJo would give you the look that says, "What in the world is happening here?"

When things are out of whack, our nature is to try to restore balance. We find a comfortable temperature that balances warm and cold. We seek that work-life balance that avoids feelings of guilt for giving too little attention to one aspect of life or the other. We balance our diets to support bodily health and our activities to support mental health.

Finding balance for your herd

This issue of the *Angus Beef Bulletin* focuses on finding that ideal balance for your operation.

Balanced nutrition for the cow herd supports immune function and all the things we ask those cows to do — grow, lactate, reproduce. A balanced herd health program balances the cost of prevention with the risk of disease. The choice to use a remote delivery device to treat an animal is a balance between convenience and necessity, with Beef Quality Assurance in its wake.

Focusing on a single trait, or even a set of traits, can cause unintended consequences that create problems down the road. Without attention given to hold other traits in line, pursuing one aspect of herd performance can lead to profit-robbing changes in other traits. Used correctly, dollar value indexes (\$Values) can help balance traits for a particular objective.

Not the same for all

Finding the balance among traits can improve profitability. But that brings up another point. "Balance" differs for everyone. It would likely take a rock of a different size to balance a teeter-totter with me sitting on the other end than if you were sitting on it. Blueberries prefer a soil acidity that differs from what makes beans and corn flourish. Balancing resources and production, the ideal level of milk and mature cow size here in Missouri will be different than in Arizona.

Unfortunately, it's often the wrecks that point us back toward balance. A lower conception rate can point us back to a moderate-frame cow or a more realistic milk level. A higher calf death loss can make us fine-tune our genetics, our health program or our calendar.

Less obvious are the production losses we don't see until they become huge, requiring more time to resolve. Keeping records, even the most basic — conception rates, weaning rates, average weaning weight, number of calves born during each interval, body condition of the herd — can help us spot imbalances before they get too far. **I**



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