

Beef Talk **Pounds weaned per cow exposed holding at 500 pounds**

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The market talk was casual until the producer leaned over and said, "We just marketed a 90.8% calf crop with an average weight of 560 pounds at 189 days of age."

The room grew quiet.

"Are you sure?" a neighbor asked.
"Yep, but I was just average. Maybe someday I can manage my way to the upper third," the rancher replied.

Culling time

As I write this, culling begins next week. The hope is that enough hay is available to hold over the core of the cow herd.

The first step to culling cows is to know where one is in terms of benchmarks. This knowledge will help steer the process.

On an annual basis, the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA) calculates and updates the benchmarks from producers enrolled in the Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software (CHAPS). CHAPS is an inventory-based program that does not allow for the omission of cow records.

Both reproductive and performance data is indicative of today's upper Great Plains beef cattle production. The benchmarks are a running five-year average of herds that have been in the CHAPS program a minimum of three years.

For comparing 2008 herd performance, the new benchmarks will be based on 2003 through 2007 herd performance records for a total of 386 herd years. The actual number of herd years in the system is 551, but not all the herds make the three-year cut off or are outside of North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Minnesota.

All those 'naysayers' that claim you cannot wean 500 lb. per cow exposed to the bull should look again.

Benchmarks

Through CHAPS, the NDBCIA evaluated 107,580 records during this time. A total of 77,975 individual cow-calf records met the criteria.

The number of qualifying cow records (and the actual number of submitted records in parentheses) for each year is:

2007 – 15,414 cow records
(23,051 submitted)
2006 – 19,858 cow records
(23,284 submitted)
2005 – 14,677 cow records
(19,823 submitted)
2004 – 14,086 cow records
(18,429 submitted)
2003 – 13,940 cow records
(22,993 submitted)

Although annual trends are very evident in the database, the bottom-line number of pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed is still holding at 500 lb. The individual year estimates are 477 lb. for 2003, 516 lb. for 2004, 512 lb. for 2005, 502 lb. for 2006 and 494 lb. for 2007.

This is just one trait NDBCIA monitors through CHAPS. Additional traits can be used to benchmark herd production in a producer's herd.

The average CHAPS producer exposed 206 cows to bulls. The cows had an average age of 5.7 years. Of the 206 cows exposed to the bull, 93.5% were pregnant in the fall, 92.8% calved in the spring and 90.8% weaned a calf in the fall.

During the calving season, 64.2% calved during the first 21 days, 89.2% during the first 42 days and 95.7% in the first 63 days of the calving season. The actual weaning age was 189 days, weaning weight was 560 lb. and the frame score was 5.8.

These growth numbers translated into 3.01 lb. of weight per day of age (WDA) and a 637-lb. adjusted 205-day weight. For every cow exposed, CHAPS producers weaned 500 lb. of calf.

Optimize

These numbers assist with managerial and genetic selection. There are no absolute answers to what a particular ranch should produce.

The academic answer is optimization. In reality, the need is to grow profitable cattle that a producer can appreciate and still meet industry needs. Producers also need cattle that convert resources into cash without breaking the bank.

Each producer must answer the question, but the answer must be based on data that ultimately tells you if you are in the game. However, one thing is for sure, all those "naysayers" that claim you cannot wean 500 lb. per cow exposed to the bull should look again because your neighbor may well be filling more trucks and trailers.

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American Angus Association, 3201 Frederick Avenue, Saint Joseph, Missouri 64506
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I (we) hereby make application to the Board of Directors of the AMERICAN ANGUS ASSOCIATION for Regular Membership and, in consideration of acceptance, agree to conform to and abide by the By-Laws, Rules and Regulations of the Association and Amendments or Modifications thereto which may, from time to time, be adopted. By signing this application for membership, applicant irrevocably waives any claim against and grants an absolute release to the American Angus Association, any member, employee or agent of the Association, for any act or omission in connection with the Association, including but not limited to, any enforcement of the rules and regulations presently in effect or hereafter adopted by the Association. It is requested that the Membership be entered as follows:

Membership Name _____ **Location of Herd** _____
PLEASE PRINT (Limit Name to 24 Spaces) (City) (County) (State)

Mail Address _____
(P.O. Box, or Street) (City) (County) (State) (Zip)

E-Mail _____ **Date of Birth (If under 21 years of age)** _____

Phone # Home () _____ **Signed** _____

Phone # Business () _____ **Date** _____

Fax # () _____

- Fee of \$80.00 is enclosed and includes a one year subscription to *Angus Journal*
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The length of the membership name and location must not exceed 40 spaces, for example:
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40
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Table 1: CHAPS 2008 production benchmarks

Number exposed	206 cows
Average cow age	5.7 years
Pregnancy percentage	93.5%
Calving percentage	92.8%
Weaning percentage	90.8%
Calving first 21 days	64.2%
Calving first 42 days	89.2%
Calving first 63 days	95.7%
Average weaning age	189 days
Average weaning weight	560 lb.
Average frame score	5.8
Weight per day of age	3.01 lb.
Pounds weaned per cow exposed	500 lb.
Replacement percentage	15%
Culling percentage	14.6%