



Beef Talk

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Can you compete?

Each year, the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA) selects criteria to determine an outstanding producer from the many involved with the organization. Many traits and producers have been highlighted through the years.

Some of the recent traits utilized include:

- The absolute pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed;
- The rate of increase in pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed over time;
- Herds that have maintained pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed above 550 pounds (lb.), plus kept the annual replacement rate below 20%; and
- Those herds that have maintained pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed above 495 lb., plus maximum percentage of cows calving within the first 21 days of the calving season or within the first 42 days of the calving season.

Additional criteria have included various weight traits, such as cow weight,

actual calf weight, calf weight adjusted to 205 days of age and average daily gain (ADG), plus reproductive traits.

This year, the NDBCIA settled on selecting herds based on maximum 205-day adjusted weight and maximum pregnancy

percentage within 2- and 3-year-old cows. The discussion centered on value of growth, but the group realized cows need to reproduce to have calves that grow.

Although total herd reproduction is ultimately the governing factor, an excellent indicator of herd reproductive status is the rebreeding ability of first- and second-calf heifers — females that were 2 and 3 years old at time of breeding.

Revealing data

A printout of individual herd data ranked on the selected criteria is used. The board reviews the data using the

current year and two previous years. A minimum of three years of data is required to be considered for the nomination.

Data from the 2004 calf crop reveal several herds with 205-day adjusted weight averages of more than 700 lb. — for example, 743, 737, 713, 708, 702, 716 and 706 lb. Although the specific-age reproductive rates will need to be calculated, 22 herds have a historical pregnancy percentage of more than 95%. Not all the herds will meet the data requirements, but several herds will end

up in the pool of potential winning herds.

A review of the data reveals the 2004 overall average for NDBCIA herds was a 653-lb.

205-day adjusted weight and just more than a 93% pregnancy rate. As the NDBCIA varies the criteria for selection of the outstanding producer, the most obvious conclusion is that there are many outstanding beef producers, and they all develop slightly different systems of beef production.

The common denominator is production, and NDBCIA members know how to produce beef using a production system based on and guided by records. The managerial steering is not by the seat of the pants, but by a very diligent, gentle modification of inputs to gauge optimum output.

If there is a negative to the current strong beef market, it would be a tendency to relax the intensity of managing all the inputs that go into beef production. The slack may be minor in today's markets, but, historically, survival has meant managing the slack and getting the last drop of profit from every available input.

In the beef business, data is knowledge, which translates to power. NDBCIA records generate knowledge, and management of inputs illustrates power.

These concepts are well-anchored within NDBCIA, but perhaps estranged at times in the industry as a whole. For now, the drumroll has started, and soon a new herd will emerge as this year's example within NDBCIA of excellent beef production that is based on calf weight and cow reproductive rate.

Your comments are always welcome at www.beef-talk.com. For more information, contact the NDBCIA, 1133 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.com. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0273.



Calling all NDBCIA Producers

Minimum herd qualifications for Producer of the Year

205-day adjusted average weaning weight	653 pounds
Average pregnancy rate	93 percent

Can you compete?

Editor's Note: Addressing the past, present and future state of the beef cattle business, "Beef Talk" is a weekly column distributed by the North Dakota State University, NDSU, Agricultural Communication office. Ringwall is executive secretary of the NDBCIA, director of the Dickinson Research Extension Center and an NDSU Extension beef specialist. An archive of columns can be found at www.BeefTalk.com, and your comments are always welcome.