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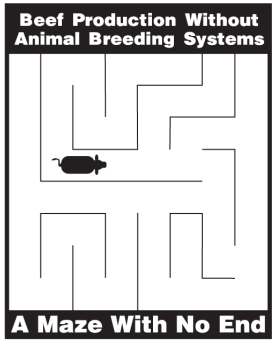
BeefTalk: Where are the Breeding Systems?

Have we forgotten the need for breeding systems and the benefits that a good breeding system will bring?

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

Images



Beef Production Without Animal Breeding Systems - A Maze With No End

The underlying feel to many discussions today is that cattle are too big.

The question often is embedded in other thoughts, such as management, nutrition, reproduction, health or just plain producer ramblings. The question is often vague because data is generally lacking.

Perhaps this leads to a basic question within the beef industry: "Where are the breeding systems?" Where are the details of the breeding programs

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columns

Renewable Accounts: Renewable Accounts: The Price of Everything (2016-02-17) Understanding the concept of opportunity cost will be important to farmers in the coming years. FULL STORY

BeefTalk: BeefTalk: Where are the Breeding Systems? (2016-02-25) Have we forgotten the need for breeding systems and the benefits that a good breeding system will bring? FULL STORY

Prairie Fare: Prairie Fare: How Can You Tell if Food is Safe to Eat? (2016-02-25) In general, leftover perishable foods (cooked meat, casseroles, vegetables) kept at 40 F or below should be

that could lend themselves to tweaks that might offer a solution?

In my years of travel and educational experiences with beef producers, several thoughts come to mind as to how the industry has progressed and how the industry has moved to the current dynamics. Some thoughts are very exciting and make good presentations; others rest on the side of concern and more pondering than presentation. The "why of the world" rests amongst those pondering those thoughts and leads to more thoughts.

Therein lies the initial question: Where are the breeding systems in the beef industry? And to be honest, where are they? Have we forgotten the need for breeding systems and the benefits that a good breeding system will bring?

I do want to acknowledge that some producers have implemented breeding systems, but many have not.

Every presentation regarding sire selection generally introduces the need for goals, objectives and desired outcomes. Sire selection alone is not a goal, objective or outcome. Sire selection is only a component of a well-designed breeding system; however, it's certainly a significant component. Breeding systems have goals, objectives and outcomes that are reflective of the total beef operation.

used within three or four days. FULL STORY

Small-business Savvy: Small-business Savvy: Promises and Reputation (2016-02-18) Don't make promises you can't keep. FULL STORY

Most domesticated livestock, particularly dairy, swine and poultry, exist in production today with the implementation of extensive breeding systems put into practice to accomplish the operations' goals and objectives. Beef production tends to be the exception.

As noted, some producers have examples of various stages of breeding systems, but the implementation of a good commercial beef cattle breeding system across years and even generations is not simple. We know how to, but the implementation gets fuzzy.

Historically, the beef industry is challenged with selection of traits (breeding goals?) that rest within the concept that more is always better. Regardless of trait, we want more growth, more muscle, greater average daily gain, greater feed efficiency, more marbling, more rib eye, greater percent pregnant, greater percent weaned, greater longevity, greater, more, greater, more and on and on.

Biologically, this push for more does not work. Everything has an end, and living things are best if they tend to function in a midrange, somewhat buffered from extremes. A producer selecting a bull based on the previous assumptions certainly will achieve a desired outcome, but how that bull fits into the breeding system at home simply may be unknown.

Without being too blunt, many times, no established breeding system exists at home, so the question of fit never is asked. The subsequent development of heifers and maintaining a working system within the cow herd and available pastures generally confound well-thought-out intentions.

Current general discussion indicates breed often dictates bull selection and selection questions generally are breed-dependent. That being said, breeding systems are applicable to within breed just as much as across breed.

Producers tend to automatically assume crossbreeding when the breeding systems discussions come up, which is unfortunate because breeds certainly can develop lines of cattle that can fit different production scenarios. Is that happening? Perhaps the thought arrives as a common question: How do commercial cattle producers design and manage a profitable beef cattle type?

Within breed or across breed, breeding systems need to become a reality to actually design and manage profitable beef cattle. Breeders are struggling, breed associations are struggling and commercial producers are struggling, which is odd because more information is available today than has ever been available. However, copious amounts of data are relatively useless without, once again, goals, objectives and specific identified outcomes.

Sorry for rambling, but the beef industry is entering another chapter, which is going to be expensive. Production and prices will continue to interact, but the cow-calf producer is going to have to get creative to survive. No perfect answers are available, but breeding systems would help.

May you find all your ear tags.

For more information, contact your local NDSU Extension Service agent (https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/extension/directory) or Ringwall at (701) 456-1103 or kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu.

NDSU Agriculture Communication - Feb. 25, 2016

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Attachments

PDF - Beef Production Without Animal Breeding Systems - A Maze With No End (NDSU_Extension_Service_BeefTalk_022516.pdf - 385.05 Kb)

EPS - Beef Production Without Animal Breeding Systems - A Maze With No End (NDSU_Extension_Service_BeefTalk_022516.eps - 225.18 Kb)