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BeefTalk: Commercial Beef Production Benchmarks for 2016

Achievable goals are the first steps toward improvement in a beef operation.

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

Images

Current CHAPS Production Benchmarks	
Number exposed	265 cows
Average cow age	5.6 years
Pregnancy percentage	93.7%
Calving percentage	93.0%
Weaning percentage	90.5%
Calving 1st 21 days	62.7%
Calving 1st 42 days	87.2%
Calving 1st 63 days	96.1%
Average weaning age	193 days
Average weaning weight	553 lbs
Average frame score	5.2
Weight gain per day	2.9 lbs.
Pounds weaned per cow exposed	494 lbs.
Replacement percentage	14.9%
Culling percentage	13.2%

Current CHAPS Production Benchmarks

The typical Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software (CHAPS) program beef producer is weaning calves from 90.5 percent of all cows exposed to the bull at 553 pounds at 193 days of age.

Those calves are grazing summer pastures alongside their mothers and gaining 2.5 pounds a day. Those numbers are reflective of beef operations today and are the result of producers setting and achieving goals.

Achievable goals are the first steps toward

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BeefTalk: BeefTalk: Commercial Beef Production Benchmarks for 2016 (2016-06-30) Achievable goals are the first steps toward improvement in a beef operation. FULL STORY

Prairie Fare: Prairie Fare: Table Etiquette 101 (2016-06-30) Have a dining experience now and then. FULL STORY

Small-business Savvy: Small-business Savvy: Competition and Clustering (2016-06-30) For small businesses, competition is not a bad thing. FULL STORY

Achievable goals are the first steps toward improvement within a beef operation. Taking the easy road, or operating without goals or concepts of improvement and simply accepting what happens, is easy to do. While that is each person's choice, a better choice is defined, reachable goals that can be accepted or changed.

Goals are very much a part of moving the beef industry forward. Goals need outcomes. Words such as "achievable," "reachable" and "forward thinking" imply that the producers setting the goals know where they are for each specific desired outcome.

Is that true? Is the outcome measureable?

For instance, take herd reproduction. How many beef producers know how many cows calve within the first 21 days of the calving season? Why should they know this? Fundamental to the setting of goals is understanding the current beef operation's performance regarding important documentable outcomes for the production unit.

To help producers understand production goals better, the North Dakota State University Extension Service, through the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA), utilizes the CHAPS program to calculate beef cattle performance by analyzing production traits.

CHAPS annually calculates five-year rolling benchmark values for average herd performance

for several traits. The data are averaged for those herds that have been in CHAPS for three years or more and have at least 50 cows.

Individual year averages are good, but a rolling five-year average provides a firmer benchmark, buffering yearly ups and downs in the data. Understanding normal, or in this case average, performance allows producers to better understand how to guide their individual herd goals. The data are presented in percentages or actual values, depending on the trait.

Today, overall reproductive traits expressed in percentages of cows exposed and some basic growth traits are presented. Herd reproduction is the driving force behind overall production. The first question a producer needs to ask is, “Are the cows breeding, conceiving, calving and weaning calves as expected?”

No excuses are allowed; below-average reproduction can show trends in regard to the management and genetics involved in a cow herd.

The typical CHAPS producer has 93.7 percent of the exposed cows being pregnant in the fall, with 93 percent calving in the spring. In the fall, 90.5 percent of the exposed cows wean a calf. In addition, during a typical calving season, 62.7 percent calve during the first 21 days, 87.2 percent calve during the first 42 days and 96.1 percent calve within the first 63 days of the calving season.

These cows were an average age of 5.6 years.

In regard to calf age and growth, actual weaning numbers were as follows: age was 193 days, weight was 553 pounds and the frame score was 5.2. These growth numbers translated into 2.9 pounds of weight per day of age, with typical average daily gain for CHAPS calves at 2.5 pounds of gain per day.

As the NDBCIA evaluates traits to measure cow performance, the trait "pounds weaned per cow exposed to the bull" is a trait that factors in management and genetics involved in a herd of cattle. For every cow exposed, typical CHAPS producers weaned 494 pounds of calf.

Knowing these numbers allows for appropriate modification through management or genetics. There are no absolute answers to what a particular ranch should produce. The setting of individual herd goals is totally a function of the individual producer.

Oftentimes, numbers can become a competition or internal race to see how big a number can be. But that is not true if one sets goals, not limits. Obviously, if poor performance is evident, obvious managerial issues must be resolved first.

Next, a good look at the overall ranch environment and review of the genetics within that environment is needed. Each producer must answer the question, based on data that ultimately tell a

producer the actual status of the operation.

Management and genetics make the cow whole, but the producer accepts the environment, establishes a managerial protocol and designs the genetics. Ultimately, each beef manager needs to take a moment and write down herd goals and try to achieve them.

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 the Dickinson Research Extension Center, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601; 701-456-1103; or kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu.

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Attachments

PDF - Current CHAPS Production Benchmarks (NDSU_Extension_Service_BeefTalk_063016.pdf - 18.85 Kb)

EPS - Current CHAPS Production

Benchmarks
(NDSU_Extension_Service_BeefTalk_063016.eps - 216.98 Kb)