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## **Pounds Weaned Per Cow Exposed: How Herds Differ**

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Pounds weaned per cow exposed remains one of the core traits identified by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association as a key production statistic. Pounds weaned per cow exposed indicates changes in the direction of production. Why that change is occurring needs to be understood as well.

Before I answer that question, let's go back and look further into the variation that exists with this trait. Over the past 10 years, the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association through the Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software (CHAPS) program has calculated production records on more than 185,000 cows exposed to bulls. From 1993 to 1998, the data indicate that the average herd produced 478 pounds of calf per cow exposed. Obviously, the way to increase pounds weaned is to simply let the calves get older and larger. To get on a level comparison field, it is important to adjust this pounds weaned per cow exposed based on the age of the calf.

Between 1993 and 1998, the average age of all the calves in the data is 201 days. Upon calculation, I still get 478 pounds of calf produced per cow exposed.

However, the big difference that surfaces is among individual herds. As illustrated in the accompanying chart, the top third of the herds produced 517 actual pounds of calf per cow exposed, the middle third produced 484 pounds and

the bottom third only produced 432 pounds.

Do you know how many pounds you produced?

Things get even more interesting when calf weights are adjusted by age. The top herds did not wean later to produce heavier calves as you might expect. When adjusted for the age of the calf, the pounds weaned per cow exposed increases for the top herds to 541 pounds, slightly decreases for the middle herds to 481 pounds and dramatically decreases for the bottom herds to 412 pounds. Not only are the top herds weaning more weight, they're doing it in less time.

The actual age at the time of weighing for the calves in the top, middle and bottom herds is 190, 201 and 210 days, respectively. The herd that produced the most pounds weaned per cow exposed produced 658 pounds at 201 days of age, and the herd that produced the least produced 219 pounds at the same age.

From these statistics, it's clear that we have variability in the beef industry. Where does your herd fall?

The top herds are producing 1.3 calves in terms of weight weaned compared to the bottom herds (541 pounds divided by 412 pounds). In the most extreme case, there is a 430-pound difference between the top herd and bottom herd. In weight, the top herd produced three calves per cow compared to the bottom herd.

If this trait indicates efficiency, how efficient are some of our beef herds?

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.beefstalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA office, 1133 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to [www.chaps2000.com](http://www.chaps2000.com). In correspondence, refer to this column as BT002.

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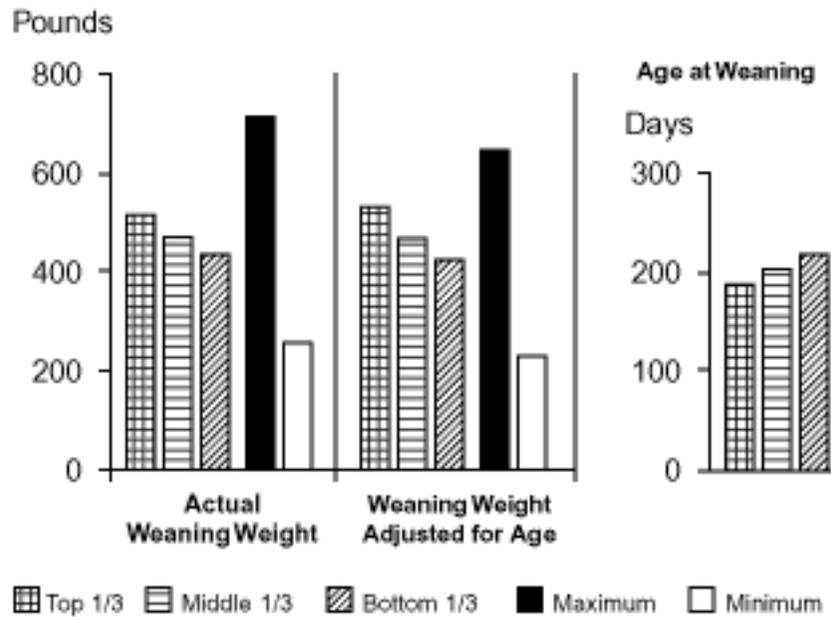
For more information, contact the NDBCIA office, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 Phone: (701)483-2045, or go to [www.beefstalk.com](http://www.beefstalk.com) on the Internet. In correspondence, refer to this column as BT001.

**Source:** Kris Ringwall, (701) 483-2045

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### Average Pounds Weaned per Cow Exposed

Source: N.D. Beef Cattle Improvement Association.



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