

Data Study Helps Evaluation of Moderate Framed Beef Cows

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As the bull buying season continues, it's critical that producers define how they want their future calf crops to look. The North Dakota State University Dickinson Research Extension Center has used a pool of 21 AI Angus bulls in recent years. As new bulls become available, bulls are added to the pool and others are removed.

Throughout the years, consistent use of certain bulls helps us measure genetics over different environmental conditions. Weather conditions directly affect calf crop performance but calves sired by the same bull over time have very similar genetics and allow us to evaluate performance under various conditions.

Our cow herd is primarily a combination of black, black baldies, red baldies and red-colored cattle. The color patterns do not imply the actual performance of the herd, so I will also note, according to last year's CHAPS analysis, the cows weighed 1,279 pounds at weaning with a 4.9 frame score.

The herd produced steer calves weighing an average of 543 pounds at weaning and heifer calves weighing an average of 506 pounds at weaning. In general, these cows are slightly smaller than typical cows (frame 4.9 versus 5.3), slightly lighter (1,279 pounds versus 1,306 pounds), and wean slightly lighter steer calves (543 pounds versus 555 pounds) and slightly lighter heifers (506 pounds versus 530 pounds).

Without going into immense detail, our objectives are being met with these cows. We maintain a medium-framed, medium-weight cow herd.

One of the questions we deal with is whether to stay with the current pool of AI Angus bulls or add new genetics. In general, the current pool of AI bulls has sired calves seven pounds lighter in birth weight than the average calf in the herd, and eight pounds heavier at seven months of age. The trend is an excellent one to maintain and was accomplished by restricting birth weight EPD (Expected Progeny Difference) to two

pounds or less and selecting moderate-growth bulls with weaning weight EPDS of +25 to +48 pounds.

Recent additions to the pool have focused on working the weaning weight EPDs into the low 40s. The question that rolls through my mind deals with whether or not there is enough growth in this herd to justify retained ownership of the calves.

Glancing at the first few years of carcass data, the first additions to the bull pool averaged more than 3.25 pounds average daily gain. Some of the recent bulls have averaged more than 3.5 average daily gain. In fact, the most recent additions are averaging more than four pounds average daily gain in the feed yard.

What I found interesting, by focusing on moderate growth with low birth weight, was that feedlot gain did not suffer. This does not mean feedlot gain could not be improved. Adapting a cow herd means controlling cow size, eliminating birth problems and still pushing growth, the No. 1 profit indicator.

For this year, without boring you with several more pages of data, the Angus bull selection thresholds for the Center are becoming clearer. The birth weight EPD needs to be less than +2 pounds, the weaning weight EPD needs to be greater than +40 pounds, the yearling weight EPD needs to be greater than +74 pounds and yearling height less than +.7. Keeping the upper 30 percent of the breed for milk, ribeye area and marbling would round off the sire selection. So much for the window shopping, I need to get some semen ordered.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com. For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.com on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0135.

EPD Selection Threshold Goals for AI Angus Sires

NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center

Birth weight	less than + 2 lbs
Weaning weight	greater than + 40 lbs
Yearling weight	greater than + 74 lbs
Yearling height	less than + .7
Milk	greater than + 20
Carcass ribeye area	greater than + 0.20
Carcass marbling	greater than + 0.15