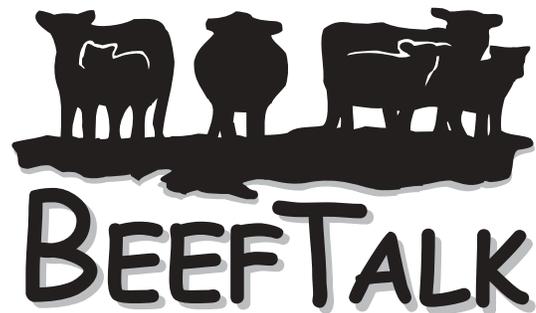


When Dealt a Royal Flush, Bid High

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Most people enjoy a game of cards now and again. Even if one doesn't play very frequently, the feeling of drawing just the right card certainly causes a momentary rush of excitement.

That excitement is what we search for in life, a moment of pleasure that takes away some of the more demanding points of the day and simply replaces them with softer, more pleasing moments. If you play whist, pinochle, canasta or more complicated games, make sure the seriousness of the play doesn't get in the way of the pleasurable moment relieving the day's stress. (A game of crazy eight with kids may be the best game for relieving stress, as the kids laugh at who gets the wild card or has to skip a turn.)

The point for today is to recall the feeling of expectation whenever one draws a card and matches that card to the eternal hope of what is needed. When the card matches the expectation, the mind and body rejoices silently unless you are playing with kids.

Cards and the beef business are, in many ways, equal games of chance. Although the six guns have been put away, and the game is more civil, there still remains an element of chance.

In today's environment, minimizing risk is a critical key to survival. I am always asked by young producers what to do. My mind quickly floats to those who have been in the business and made it work.

Recently, a longtime North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association producer let me know the family was retiring and dispersing the herd. After a moment of denial, I wished him well.

For the benefit of younger producers, this producer would certainly be a model. Buying cattle from his dispersion would be like being dealt a royal flush. If performance was equated to cards, and I needed seven, I would be all smiles.

For the last seven years, this retiring producer has

had 205 day weights with averages of 599, 611, 651, 652, 654, 654 and 624 pounds per calf per year. The herd beat the value of 613 pounds for other typical CHAPS producers. And the cows kept rebreeding with average calving percentages of 91, 88, 96, 93, 95, 97 and 97 percent for the last seven years. Again, the herd beat the typical value of 92.8 percent by almost three percentage points.

In the same seven year period, or seven cards for the anticipating card shark, the cows calved quickly, with 98, 98, 99, 96, 98, 99 and 100 percent of those cows calving within 63 days, over four percentage points better than the typical producer.

Combining growth and reproduction, a pound weaned per cow exposed is the ace in the hole. For every cow exposed to the bull in the spring since 1990, this herd has weaned 541, 505, 549, 586, 541, 575, 561, 528, 499, 556, 567, 596, 531 and 525 pounds per cow exposed. Sometimes, for those producers that live in denial, they forget the typical CHAPS producer today is weaning over 500 pounds per cow exposed, but in this outstanding producer's herd, 547 pounds of calf has been weaned for every cow exposed. In today's market, that means a boost of \$50 for every cow in the herd.

Without prolonging the discussion, obviously expenses also have been a serious part of the equation for this producer. At least for now, as friend and neighbor gather at the table to await the cards or, should I say, cows to be dealt, rest assured the game is right.

Wow, I can't wait to bid on this hand. May you find all your USAIP 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 BT0202.

Can You Get There?

Lifetime Achievement Award – A Tale of Achievement for a Retiring Producer

	Five Year Producer Average	Bench Mark for CHAPS Users	Achievement
Calf WW 205 days	647	613	34
Cows calving	95.7 %	92.8 %	2.9 %
Cows calving in 63 days	98.3 %	93.8 %	4.5 %
Lbs weaned/cow exposed	555	501	54