

Proper Bull Care Now Will Bring Dividends Next Spring

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Bull M389 at the Dickinson Research Extension Center may not look like an Olympic champion today, but as a coming 3-year-old in the natural service bull lineup at the Center, he is important. At this time of year, bulls should be recouping from a summer of breeding cows.

As the old saying goes, the bull is half the herd, but unfortunately, other than the day he was purchased, he often doesn't get the management attention he deserves. The term *undeserving* is really a question of value.

In regards to other Hereford bulls, M389 was born May 22, 2002, and has the following expected progeny difference (EPDs). In regards to calving ease, he is not a calving-ease bull. His calving ease EPD is -6.1 and has a birthweight EPD of 8.3. However, his use on mature cows was not a problem. In terms of growth, the bull has a weaning weight EPD of 52, ranking the bull in the upper 2 percent of the breed and a yearling weight EPD of 97, ranking in the upper 1 percent. In terms of siring heifers that excel in milk, the bull has a maternal milk EPD value of 15, ranking in the upper 40 percent of young Hereford bulls.

On the carcass side of the equation, the bull's EPD values for fat, rib eye area and intramuscular fat are -0.01, -0.01 and 0.07, respectively. These values rank M389 in the upper 10 percent for fat deposition, upper 75 percent for rib eye area and upper 15 percent for intramuscular fat.

In generic terms, realizing not everyone understands EPD values, the bull M389 is an exceptional growth bull for use only on mature cows. M389 will produce acceptable heifers, and his steer calves will hang a decent carcass on the rail in regards to fat. His steer calves could probably use a little more rib eye and have a tendency to have greater intramuscular fat than other typical calves sired by young Hereford bulls.

Given the need to grow and grade, the steers from M389 should work for the Center and be worthy of retaining ownership. That is great, but right now, M389 weighs in at 1,815 pounds and only has a condition score of 5. Somewhat on the lean side going into winter and weighing less

than an average herd sire, for his value, care needs to be taken to make sure M389 is here in the spring and ready and able to breed cows.

M389 is not the only bull worthy of keeping over for next year's breeding season. The coming 3-year-old bulls average 1,895 pounds and range in condition score from 5 to 7. The younger set of coming 2-year-old bulls average 1,376 and have the same range in body condition. Ideally, just like cows, the bulls should at least have a condition score of 6 in the spring and continue to gain body weight all winter. By next spring, as 3-year-olds, the bulls should all be tonners, in other words weigh in excess of 2,000 pounds on the trek to reaching their mature weight at 4 to 6 years of age.

Grabbing the nutrient requirements of beef cattle off the shelf, the nutrient requirements for a 1,900-pound bull, gaining 0.5 pounds a day, calls for a daily intake of 35.8 pounds of forage (i.e., hay or grass) that is 6.9 percent protein and contains a minimum of 0.85 megacalories (Mcal) of metabolizable energy per pound of feed. The younger bulls at 1,400 pounds, gaining 1 pound a day, need 29.8 pounds of forage at 7.5 percent protein and 0.92 Mcals of metabolizable energy.

As a geneticist, keep the good bulls, cull the rest and feed the keepers correctly. The grass isn't growing, so if there is not enough stockpiled hay in the pasture for the older bulls to eat 36-plus pounds, start supplying some hay and call your nutritionist to build a bull supplement.

Your smile will come in the spring with a good pool of great bulls.

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 BT0223.

**Current Genetic Value (EPDs) of Bull M389
Dickinson Research Extension Center**

	M389	Contemporary Group EPD Averages
Calv. ease direct (%)	-6.1	-0.4
Birth weight	+8.3	3.8
Weaning weight	+52	35
Yearling weight	+97	59
Milk	+15	13
Milk and growth	+41	31
Calv. ease mat. (%)	-4.9	0.4
Scrotal circ.	+0.5	0.6
Fat	-0.01	0.00
Rib eye area	-0.01	0.05
IMF %	+0.07	0.00

EPD values from the American Hereford Association
Web site www.hereford.org