

Can You Compete?

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Each year, the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA) selects criteria to determine an outstanding producer from the many involved with the organization. Many traits and producers have been highlighted through the years.

Some of the recent traits utilized include:

- * The absolute pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed
- * The rate of increase in pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed over time
- * Herds that have maintained pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed above 550 pounds, plus kept the annual replacement rate below 20 percent
- * Those herds that have maintained pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed above 495 pounds, plus maximum percentage of cows calving within the first 21 days of the calving season or within the first 42 days of the calving season.

Additional criteria have included various weight traits, such as cow weight, actual calf weight, calf weight adjusted to 205 days of age and average daily gain, plus reproductive traits.

This year, the NDBCIA settled on the selection of herds to those with a maximum 205-day adjusted weight and maximum pregnancy percentage within the 2- and 3-year-old cows. The discussion centered on value of growth, but realizing that cows need to reproduce to have calves that grow.

Although total herd reproduction is ultimately the governing factor, an excellent indicator of herd reproductive status is the rebreeding ability of first and second calf heifers, that is females that were 2 and 3 years old at time of breeding.

As usual, no discussion questions are asked. Used is a printout of individual herd data ranked on the selected criteria. The board reviews the data using the current year and two previous years because a minimum of three years of data is required to be considered for the nomination.

Data from the 2004 calf crop reveals several herds with 205-day adjusted weight averages over 700 pounds; for ex-

ample, 743, 737, 713, 708, 702, 716 and 706 pounds. Although the specific age reproductive rates will need to be calculated, 22 herds have a historical pregnancy percentage of more than 95 percent. Not all the herds will meet the data requirements, but several herds will end up in the pool of potential winning herds.

A review of the data reveals the 2004 overall average for NDBCIA herds was a 653-pound 205-day adjusted weight and just more than a 93 percent pregnancy rate. As the NDBCIA varies the criteria for selection of the outstanding producer, the most obvious conclusion is that there are many outstanding beef producers and they all develop slightly different systems of beef production.

The common denominator is production and NDBCIA members know how to produce beef using a production system based on and guided by records. The managerial steering is not by the seat of the pants, but by a very diligent, gentle modification of inputs to gauge optimum output.

If there is a negative to the current strong beef market, it would be a tendency to relax the intensity of managing all the inputs that go into beef production. The slack may be minor in today's markets, but, historically, survival has meant managing the slack and getting the last drop of profit from every available input.

In the beef business, data is knowledge, which translates to power. The NDBCIA records generate the knowledge and the management of inputs illustrates the power.

These concepts are well-anchored within NDBCIA, but perhaps estranged at times in the industry as a whole. For now, the drum roll has started and soon a new herd will emerge as this year's example within NDBCIA of excellent beef production that is based on calf weight and cow reproductive rate.

May you find all your NAIS-approved 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 BT0273.

Calling all NDBCIA Producers

Minimum herd qualifications for Producer of the Year

205-day adjusted average weaning weight	653 pounds
Average pregnancy rate	93 percent

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