

Lowline Cattle – Matching Calving Ease with Value on the Rail

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It takes time to put a picture puzzle together. The picture is there, but the challenge is finding the right pieces. This process may be difficult, but also exciting.

The beef business, from a producer's standpoint, is very much like the picture puzzle. Select what picture you want and start finding the pieces.

As breeding seasons nears, the time is now to solve a new puzzle. Calving time must come first in solving the puzzle, but it doesn't take a lot of records to remember calving difficulty.

Calves must arrive with ease, which is a very important part of the total cattle system. Calves also are destined for the production of meat.

One interesting picture we have worked with at the Dickinson Research Extension Center has been the use of Lowline bulls. We did this for the expressed purpose of breeding heifers.

According to the American Lowline Registry (http://www.usa-lowline.org/key_people.htm), "Australian Lowline Cattle were developed from the Angus herd which was established at the Trangie Research Centre in 1929 to provide quality breeding stock for the NSW cattle industry. ... The Trangie staff chose one herd selected for high yearling growth rates and another selected for low yearling growth rates, with a randomly selected control group. They dubbed the herds High Line, Low Line and Control Line."

Lowline cattle are another piece of the puzzle. Do Lowline cattle work in the commercial world of beef? The results have been good at the DREC. So far, only three calves out of 126 needed minor assists.

The puzzle doesn't stop at calving. The box has a lot of pieces remaining. Bulls need progeny that fit the industry. It is not easy to develop reputable programs that achieve this outcome.

Bulls are genetic packages that give producers some options. In this case, Lowline bulls need to produce calves that are small at birth and have functionality within the industry.

The whole system must fit and be a part of the picture. The picture ultimately includes red meat production. The half-blood Lowline steers that were involved in research at the DREC were sent to a commercial feed yard in fall 2004, 2005 and 2006.

The 2004-fed calves arrived as long yearlings averaging 945 pounds, with a frame score of 4.4. They finished at 1,186 pounds and brought \$1,093 on the rail. In 2005, they averaged 994 pounds, with a frame score of 4.7, at arrival. They finished at 1,297 pounds and brought \$1,223 on the rail. The 2006 calves arrived at the yard at 830 pounds and had a frame score of 4.8. They finished at 1,179 pounds and brought \$1,074 on the rail.

The calves pushed 20 months of age, but they had a home and definitely fit the picture. If you recall, we started discussing picture puzzles, so that is where we will end. As breeders, we need to have a picture in mind. We want something that works, not only for ourselves, but something that contributes to the industry.

The colors are numerous, the pieces sometimes hard to sort. At least for today, this picture has been successful in regard to calving ease and producing a product that is very marketable. The bulls produce small calves that grow.

One can start to think of how these calves will fit into the ever-changing world of beef feeding. Energy sources are getting more competitive, which ultimately may change some principles as to what works. There are many boxes of picture puzzles, so don't be afraid to pick one, even if it is just a little outside the norm.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.Beeftalk.com>. For more information, contact the NDB-CIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

Half-Blood Lowline Steers

NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center

Feeding Year	Arrival Weight	Frame Score	Finishing Weight	Value on the Rail
2004	945 lbs.	4.4	1,186 lbs.	\$1,093
2005	994 lbs.	4.7	1,297 lbs.	\$1,223
2006	830 lbs.	4.8	1,179 lbs.	\$1,074