

“These Cattle Were Very Interesting”

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The closeout summary letter on Lot 4425 said, “These cattle were very interesting.” Most conversations that begin with these or similar words indicate a polite statement will follow indicating the cattle were outside the norm.

Lot 4425 was the first small-frame score (4.4) calves the Dickinson Research Extension Center sent to a commercial feed yard. The calves were small, compared with typical North Dakota steers, even if one didn’t understand what a 4.4 meant.

The norm can be confining. Sometimes it is fun to explore outside the standard norms. Ask some questions others thought they answered a long time ago. In this case, it’s the value of smaller-framed cattle.

Like it or not, the world changes gradually, yet there is enormous energy and effort expended to keep the status quo. The present is generally where we find comfort and security, while the unknown is forbidding.

But change does come. Our folks get older and our children seem to be catching up. No one around us is standing still because it’s not an option. When we gather around the table, we realize that, for one generation, it is time to let go and for the next generation, it is time to grab hold.

For those generations that get slightly off course, Mother Nature guides the next generation back on course. For the homeowner, it may be depreciation. For the landowner, it may be lost productivity. For the cattle producer, it may be simple mortality. For us personally, it may be another aching joint. In any case, nature wins out.

The world moves on. You can fight it, but you are not going to win. There is nothing wrong with being ambitious, motivated and forward thinking. In fact, we should be, but as our years advance, wisdom, common sense and a flavoring of practicality should dominate.

Continued perpetuation of what we have may be the norm. Yet, if what we have is out of sync with Mother

Nature, we soon will realize that there is no force and no inputs that can perpetually offset a system or world that is tilted.

It is not easy to challenge systems. Recently, I came across a comment by Kit Pharo of the Pharo Cattle Company out of Colorado (<http://www.pharocattle.com>).

Kit was reflecting on feedback he received from comments about calving dates. “I know I upset people who see no possible way to calve in sync with nature. Please do not waste your time being mad at me. I don’t care when you calve or why you calve when you calve. I am just stating my opinions. Calving in sync with nature works for me -- and it has worked for everyone else that I know of who has tried it. This is a free country and you are free to calve whenever you want to - for whatever reasons you have.”

Kit is right. In the world of conservative agriculture, it is not easy to voice an opinion, but opinions are voiced. Current production practices are driven and need to be driven by economics and marketing standards that allow for a sensible industry.

But at least for today, since I am out of room, I will pull another quote in from Kit. “Many people mistakenly believe any cow under a 5 frame is a dwarf or a miniature of some sort. They’re wrong! ... When you add thickness and fleshing ability to a smaller-framed cow, you have a package that is without equal. We have some thick, easy fleshing 3 and 4 frame cows that can easily weigh 1,200 pounds. That’s big enough for any cowherd.”

More data next time, but for now, as we started, “These cattle were very interesting.”

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.

12 Month Old Steers

Frame Score	Hip Height
3	45 inches
4	47 inches
5	49 inches
6	51 inches
7	53 inches

Beef Improvement Federation Guidelines