



news | NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY | SEARCH

NDSU Extension Service | ND Agricultural Experiment Station

NDSU Agriculture Communication

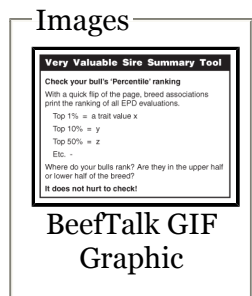
BeefTalk: Buying the Right Bull Means Checking His Grades

In the beef business, producers need to accept the fact that bulls need to be evaluated.

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

The common-sense process of buying bulls has not changed much. The requirements are simple. The bull needs four decent legs, a bit of appropriate muscle indicative of the product and a functioning reproductive system.



Cost usually determines which bull one brings home. The opportunity to buy a bull that offers a greater probability of producing profit-generating progeny is available and the evaluation process is simple.

Producer evaluation needs to focus on phenotype (what a bull looks like) and genotype (the genes a bull will pass to his progeny). What one sees is not what one always gets.

The process involves the identification of measurable traits relevant to beef production, which are traits that are indicative of profitable beef production. The secret is hidden in the traits.

In school, student learning is measured by appropriate evaluations (tests). The same is true of measuring production traits.

There are different thoughts on how to evaluate students. Yet, students are evaluated and their future careers guided by their individual interests, desires and abilities.

In the beef business, producers need to accept the fact that bulls need to be evaluated. The test results will help understand the future role of the bull.

Perhaps it is not fair to compare bull evaluations with student evaluations, but it does make for an easy comparison. As most of us have participated in parent-teacher conferences, through time we come to understand that certain grades are indicative of a better understanding of the subject than others are.

If our student is getting 90 percent of the questions right, the student could receive a high B or A for the course. If we visit during the conference and the student is getting only 40 percent of the answers right, the student may receive a D or F.

We understand that more effort or guidance may need to be involved with the growth and development of the student. We do not always like what we hear, but we move on, make decisions, and continue to guide and direct.

Now let us take that concept and apply it to what we have available to utilize in the evaluation of bulls. Breed associations publish the evaluations of all purebred bulls for appropriate traits that are indicative of performance and associated with the genes that will be passed on by the bull to his offspring.

These publications are called sire summaries and contain a tremendous amount of data. Actually, the

publications probably contain more data than many producers want to see, but the data is there.

Not unlike grading scales that are used in our own educational processes, a producer actually can go and look up how a bull did on his evaluation. Is the bull in the top 1 percent of the class or the top 50 percent?

Does the data in the sire summary show the bull is in the bottom half percentile? The point is, if one opens up the evaluations and finds the charts that generally are labeled “percentiles” or “percentile breakdowns” or something to that effect, the bull’s score or EPD (expected progeny difference) can be compared with other bulls within the breed.

Use of this data will help producers make an informed decision. Is the bull the one you want and are the evaluations of the bull's traits where they should be?

Numbers work and the producer should compare managerial and production expectations with the evaluations of the bull's performance. If one needs high growth, why not look for bulls that rank high in their weaning weight EPD or yearling weight EPD.

Select the percentile ranking one wants to deal with and then go find the bulls with the right EPDs. There are many bulls, but, as a producer, one does not need to be poorly informed.

Check those evaluations. More later.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

NDSU Agriculture Communication

Source: Kris Ringwall, (701) 483-2348, ext. 103, kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu

Editor: Rich Mattern, (701) 231-6136, richard.mattern@ndsu.edu

Attachments



BeefTalk EPS Graphic
(1231 beeftalk.eps - 215.51 Kb)



BeefTalk PDF Graphic 
(1231 beeftalk.pdf - 17.44 Kb)