

## **BeefTalk 494: Breed Percentile Tables, Performance Unveiled**

*Grab a color highlighter and prepare to decide what level of performance one wants to select when buying a bull.*

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Judging by the mail, the bull selling season is here. Many bull catalogs have arrived and more are to come.

Each bull sale catalog has unique features and provides an update on sale bulls. The catalog also tells the story of the people in the operation, which is good because people are the beef business.

After a quick review of the operation through the bull catalog, the real work does need to begin, which is selecting potential bulls.

Well-designed bull catalogs make bull selection relatively easy because the opportunity is always present to spend as much time as one likes reviewing the bulls. Pictures and pedigrees are front and center.

Next is the data line, which really tells the story of the bull. His weight and other performance factors are critical to a successful purchase.

Within the data line, generally the bull's current expected progeny difference (EPD) values are printed. These values are the most current and most relevant data available and serve to convert all that we know into numbers that bull buyers can utilize to gauge the value of one potential sire over another.

The numbers reflect what is known about the bull's data, as well as data obtained from the pedigree of the bull's family. Generally, young bulls do not have progeny data. However, in some cases, genomic data may be included and certainly will enhance the accuracy of the calculated EPDs.

Once the catalog has been reviewed on a casual note, then get serious. Review the data and then set the catalog aside.

Step one on the serious side is to find the EPD percentile table available from the breed association where the bulls are registered. Sometimes these values are printed in the catalog, but seldom are they readily made available.

Think about buying a car. Dealers will tell you the miles per gallon (mpg) that a particular car is rated at, but you usually will have to ask twice how that rating compares with a competing car. That is exactly the question we are asking about a bull. In this case, we are comparing bulls within the same herd and asking how each rates for the various traits we are interested in buying.

For example, if the catalog represents Red Angus bulls, go to the Red Angus Association Web site. Look under the genetics category called "EPD percentiles" and print the table for "percentiles for non parents under two years of age." Other breeds would be the same but may have different labeling on their respective Web sites and tables.

These tables are also available in the printed versions of the breed sire summary. Don't be afraid of the numbers and proceed to step two.

Grab a color highlighter and prepare to decide what level of performance one wants to select when buying a bull. For example, one can decide to ask to see the EPD value rankings for a particular trait much like one would ask to see the rankings for a specific car model's mpg compared with other car models.

As an example, for bulls that rank in the upper 25 percent of the breed, locate 25 percent on the left-hand side of the table and read across the table to determine the EPD value for each trait printed in the sire summary that would rank a bull at or above the 25th percentile within the breed.

Sounds complicated, but hang in there. Now take the highlighter and draw a line across the table at the 25 percent line. Wow, now you have highlighted the EPD value needed to rank a bull at the 25th percentile within the breed. By looking at the numbers above the line, one knows the EPD values of the bulls ranked within the upper 25th percentile within a breed. Performance is unveiled, which is what we are searching for.

I'll talk about the next step 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.

## 2010 Sire Summary

### Percentiles for Non Parents Under Two Years of Age

	BW	WW	YW	Milk	Marb	REA
1%	-4.9	49	90	28	0.33	0.47
25%	-1.4	36	67	20	0.15	0.19
50%	0.0	31	58	17	0.08	0.08
75%	1.4	26	49	14	0.01	-0.03

### Percentiles for Proven and Genetic Opportunity Sires

	BW	WW	YW	Milk	Marb	REA
1%	-6.2	55	100	31	0.37	0.56
25%	-1.9	39	72	21	0.15	0.20
50%	-0.2	32	60	17	0.06	0.05
75%	1.5	25	48	13	-0.03	-0.10

Source: Red Angus Association of America  
<http://redangus.org/genetics/epd-percentiles>