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## BeefTalk: Sometimes I Think the Cows Know More Than We Do

**Be prepared to collect calf data for planning purposes because planning with no data is difficult.**

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

For beef producers, fall is the time for cows to say goodbye, at least to their calves.

The summer was generally pleasant, with sufficient moisture in most places. The calves should be prepared for weaning and marketing.

But with the focus on the calves, did we forget something? Today's question: "As a beef producer, are you prepared to collect calf data for future planning as the calves leave?"

### Images

Anticipated Report Card <small>(Calf D6084)</small>		
Trait	Value	Grade
Birth weight	82 pounds	A
Weaning weight	558 pounds	A
Average daily gain	2.5 pounds	A
Frame score	5.2	A
Weight per day of age	2.9 pounds	A
Comments - Sort to replacement pen		

Anticipated Report Card - Calf D6084

### columns

#### [Spotlight on Economics: Spotlight on Economics: Are Farm Policy and Trade Important for N.D. Agriculture?](#)

(2016-10-06) A summary of the studies related to evaluating the importance of farm policy and trade on N.D. agriculture.

[FULL STORY](#)

#### [BeefTalk: BeefTalk: Sometimes I Think the Cows Know More Than We Do](#)

(2016-10-06) Be prepared to collect calf data for planning purposes because planning with no data is difficult.

[FULL STORY](#)

#### [Prairie Fare: Prairie Fare: How About Some Apple Nachos?](#)

(2016-10-06) Apples are a good source of fiber and vitamin C.

[FULL STORY](#)

#### [Small-business Savvy: Small-business Savvy: Family Businesses in the Economy](#)

(2016-10-06) Family businesses play a huge role in the economy.

[FULL STORY](#)

This is important because planning with no data is difficult at best. Recently, I strolled through the pasture on one of those perfect fall days: no wind, no noise, just a time and place. I saw S6097, a 10-year-old cow sired by the 127 Angus bull, with some Hereford in her background, licking her now-grown calf's hair and advising her calf.

She said, "You were a good calf, but I can tell by the chill in the air, the horses and riders will soon take us home."

While the recent rains greened up the pastures to provide some late-summer goodies, the grass is not what it was earlier in the year.

The cow went on to say, "It seems like just yesterday when all 82 pounds of you arrived (10 pounds lighter than your brother last year) in the dark of night on the 16th of May with no complications.

"I remember the old days, calving in the snow, muck and cold weather," she added. "You are lucky the herd boss started leaving those bulls home until August. I really appreciated that. I enjoyed the days of May a lot more.

"While 14 calves were born on your birthday, there were no disturbances by the help, no crowding, no challenges for space; just you and me," she said, nodding. "You were born on that grassy hill. You were up and nursing quickly. A gentle moo defined my spot, and the young heifer that came to

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explore moved on and calved just below the hill.

“As I get older, I appreciate a lighter birth weight,” she continued. “Your siblings averaged 88 pounds, but I especially remember your 2012 sister. At 98 pounds, I had to more than sneeze to pop her out, but I was in my prime, a strong 6 years of age and boss cow of bunk No. 9. Today, at 10, I’m holding my own.

“This year, I was sure glad the grass was green and plentiful,” she noted. “The rancher said the pastures were good. I remember when we turned into the summer native pastures. The trails were familiar to me, but some of the younger cows and their calves seemed lost. Even that next generation of ‘know-it-alls’ ruling bunk 9 had to ask for guidance.

“I have truly learned the choice spots to graze, water and nurture a young, growing heifer like you,” she told her calf. “While this was one of those drier years when we had to look harder for grass, you grew well, as your siblings have done. I am proud of their report cards.”

She went on to note, “They averaged 558 pounds at weaning, gained 2.5 pounds a day, framed in at 5.2 and weighed 2.9 pounds per day of age. Like your siblings, your performance should be noticed. But let me warn you: Don’t get unruly when the herdsman vaccinates you. That is a plus. One of your sisters turned on the herdsman when leaving

the chute, and I haven't seen her since. The crew mumbled something about disposition, and her father's temper, which your sister inherited."

Following some silence and a sentiment of disappointment, the cow went on: "The horses and riders will come soon for our final separation, so let's enjoy these next couple of weeks on the stubble fields. I noticed the word 'replacement' on the comment section on the clipboard the other day. That's a good thing because I and some of your sisters certainly will welcome you back. Your siblings have been around 5 percent above class average, so that puts your potential ranking very high. And with a moderate frame score, you will fit in fine."

The cow then said to her calf, "My advice to you: Eat a balanced diet and watch your weight gain during the winter. And when you see anybody with a pipette in his or her hand in the spring, do what I do and wiggle your ears."

The wind started to come up, so I was having more difficulty listening in, but I am pretty sure she finished with, "I can feel Junior doing a few cartwheels getting ready for next spring's delivery. I better get back to eating. I would like to maintain my current weight at 1,400 pounds and a condition score of 6. At my age, I don't want to give the crew any reason to look twice. Best of luck!"

As I left the pasture, I could not help but think

that, sometimes, the cows know more than we do. In fact, I know they do. But we still have the problem of managing, planning and improving for another year.

And remember, one written note is worth its weight in gold. So take some notes, maybe even write down the calf weights and match up some calving data to summer growth data. Then the neighbors don't have to ponder why you actually ask your cows for advice. Make a note.

May you find all your ear tags.

For more information, contact your local NDSU Extension Service agent (<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/extension/directory>) or Ringwall at the Dickinson Research Extension Center, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601; 701-456-1103; or [✉kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu](mailto:kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu).

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#### Attachments



[PDF - Anticipated Report Card - Calf](#)

[D6084](#) 

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EPS - Anticipated Report Card - Calf

D6084

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