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BeefTalk: Commercial Beef Production Benchmarks for 2017



Achievable goals are the first steps toward improvement.

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

Fall is a good time to review the status of the beef operation.

Although the quick-and-easy, seat-of-the-pants review is fun, the details are not there to supply the true facts and figures for proper evaluations.

Actually, the focus point of the Cow-Calf Management class that Chip Poland and I teach at Dickinson State University is to move future producers through a process of understanding benchmarks.

The process allows future producers to better understand the industry, as well as where they might fit.

Hoping to be a beef producer is a great positive opportunity, as hope is good, but becoming a beef producer who has a predictable future and establishes a successful beef operation is challenging. Understanding benchmarking helps.

Recently, Jennifer Ramsay co-authored an article in the North Dakota Beef Report titled "Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software (CHAPS): 15 Years of Beef Production Benchmarks." The NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center calculates yearly averages of herd data from producers. The CHAPS team then calculates five-year rolling average benchmarks.

A review of the 2017 benchmarks is a worthy read. CHAPS beef producers are weaning 554-pound calves from 91 percent of all cows exposed to the bull at 192 days of age.

Images

Current CHAPS Production Benchmarks	
Number exposed	265 cows
Average cow age	5.6 years
Pregnancy percentage	93.8%
Calving percentage	93.3%
Weaning percentage	91.0%
Calving 1st 21 days	62.8%
Calving 1st 42 days	87.4%
Calving 1st 63 days	96.1%
Average weaning age	192 days
Average weaning weight	554 lbs
Average frame score	5.2
Weight gain per day	2.9 lbs
Pounds weaned per cow exposed	498 lbs
Replacement percentage	14.7%
Culling percentage	13.2%

Current CHAPS Production Benchmarks

columns

Spotlight on Economics: Spotlight on Economics: Waters of the United States (2017-10-10) Now may be the time for the legislative branch to clarify the scope of the Clean Water Act. [FULL STORY](#)

BeefTalk: BeefTalk: Commercial Beef Production Benchmarks for 2017 (2017-10-26) Achievable goals are the first steps toward improvement. [FULL STORY](#)

Prairie Fare: Prairie Fare: Tasting Cookie Dough is Hazardous for New Reasons (2017-10-26) Flour and some other grain-based foods have been linked to foodborne illness outbreaks. [FULL STORY](#)

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These calves are grazing summer pastures alongside their mothers and gaining 2.5 pounds a day. These numbers reflect producer goals.

Ramsay writes that beef producers and Extension professionals have used CHAPS as a management tool since 1985 to establish industry benchmarks. Producers use CHAPS to calculate herd benchmarks, which producers use to set herd goals and manage their herds to achieve their goals.

Achievable goals are the first steps toward improvement. Goals, a major part of moving the beef industry forward, need outcomes. Words such as "achievable," "reachable" and "forward thinking" imply that the producers setting the goals know where they are for each specific desired outcome.

Is that true? Is the outcome measurable? Fundamental to the setting of goals is understanding the current beef operation's performance regarding important documentable outcomes for the production unit.

To help producers, CHAPS annually calculates five-year rolling benchmark values for average herd performance for several traits. The data are averaged for those herds that have been in CHAPS for three years or more and have at least 50 cows.

Individual year averages are good, but a rolling five-year average provides a firmer benchmark, buffering yearly ups and downs in the data. Understanding normal, or in this case, average, performance allows producers to better understand how to guide their individual herd goals.

Data are presented in percentages or actual values, depending on the trait. Today, overall reproductive traits are expressed in percentages of cows exposed, and some basic growth traits are presented.

The typical CHAPS producer has 93.8 percent of the exposed cows pregnant in the fall, with 93.3 percent calved in the spring. In the fall, 91 percent of the cows exposed weaned a calf. In addition, during a typical calving season, 62.8 percent calved during the first 21 days, 87.4 percent during the first 42 days and 96.1 percent within the first 63 days of the calving season. These cows had an average age of 5.6 years.

In regard to calf age and growth, actual weaning numbers were as follows: age was 192 days, weight was 554 pounds and the frame score was 5.2. These growth numbers translated into 2.9 pounds of weight per day of age, with typical average daily gain for CHAPS calves at 2.5 pounds of gain per day.

The cow performance trait “pounds weaned per cow exposed to the bull” is a trait that factors in management and genetics in a herd of cattle. For every cow exposed, typical CHAPS producers weaned 498 pounds of calf. Knowing these numbers allows for appropriate modification through management or genetics.

The setting of individual herd goals is totally a function of the individual producer. Numbers can become a competition or internal race to see how big a number can be. But that is not true if one set goals, not limits.

Obviously, if poor performance is evident, managerial issues first must be resolved. Next, a good look at the overall ranch environment and review of the genetics within that environment are needed. Each producer must answer the question, based on data that ultimately tell a producer the actual status of the operation.

Management and genetics make the cow whole, but the producer accepts the environment, establishes a managerial protocol and designs the genetics. Ultimately, each beef manager needs to take a moment to write down herd goals and try to achieve them.

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.

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source:	Kris Ringwall, 701-456-1103, kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu
editor:	Ellen Crawford, 701-231-5391, ellen.crawford@ndsu.edu

Attachments



[PDF - Current CHAPS Production Benchmarks](#)

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[EPS - Current CHAPS Production Benchmarks](#)

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