

The Biggest Blowfish Use EPDs

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Feedback from BeefTalk articles is always welcome. Unfortunately, time constraints limit the number of responses. Last week's story on "blowfish" generated many thoughts. Often, if a thought is generated, that should be considered a success.

In the world of beef production, finding the finite, absolute answer is very difficult. All environments are different and many times management techniques or protocols must be modified to accommodate local environments.

This certainly would be true of genetics as not all cattle fit all environments. What is interesting is how, as producers, we attempt to develop a plan that we can make fit into our operation.

One truth that is not debatable is that numbers need to be incorporated into the bull buying thought process to effectively evaluate all options. My experience is that any time an article is written regarding the use of EPDs (Expected Progeny Differences), the responses vary widely.

However, one common thread does exist. Many producers simply are skeptical of utilizing numbers instead of something we can touch and feel. The original point was referencing the need to be careful when numbers are not presented, as what one sees is not always what one gets, particularly when buying bulls.

The connecting point for beef producers was that there are blowfish (things that puff out and look big and mean, but in reality are just skinny little fish) within the beef industry. The best defense is numbers, since blowfish bulls look big and pretty, but they don't deliver in regard to the calf crop they produce and the producer ultimately sells.

The counterpoint is that through the years, there are those producers who have represented bulls with numbers that were not the most accurate. In fact, some bull sellers actually may have misrepresented a particular bull by using invalid numbers. For those who didn't get what I just said, the point is this: Some people lie.

As a defense, many producers have opted not to uti-

lize nor trust numbers and default back to a visual appraisal, which means what you see is what you get. Articles that promote numbers (in this case EPDs) become suspect. The door simply is slammed shut and the salesman told to go home. This creates a serious dilemma.

Numbers are needed and should be utilized to make decisions. When numbers are ignored in the world of genetics and within any managerial process, a producer is no longer utilizing tools that can lead to real change.

The point still remains. The best plan for any bull buying strategy is one based on the use of EPDs, but, as was pointed out to me very vividly, some of "the biggest blowfish are those who utilize EPDs." This can create a major fundamental issue in the management of beef herds.

Breed associations go to great lengths to assure accurate and true numbers are presented to producers. Breeding companies attempt to include a high percentage of proven bulls within their inventory for producer use. These bulls are tested independently of the wishes of one producer and must stand the test of time for many traits.

While numbers can be misused, I still need to err on the side of trust. I need to seek assurance from astute breed associations to make sure the numbers are true and will work.

In addition, simple selection based on a production trait does not equate to profit. Producers need a plan that may utilize the newer index EPDs or an astute blend of single traits, but remember that selection for any EPD still will not assure that a profit is made.

Yes, the blowfish article was a little on the extreme, but the hope was and still is that those who don't incorporate some level of EPD understanding are missing an opportunity to help their selection process.

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.

Bottom Line

High proven sires work and
a good choice for any herd
genetic program.