BeefTalk: 2009 Production Benchmarks Are In

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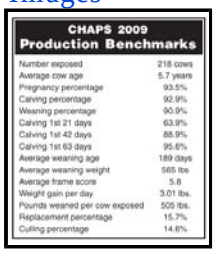
Images



CHAPS 2009 Production Benchmarks

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The new scores for beef cattle performance have just arrived. The scores are the annual North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA) benchmark values gathered from producers utilizing the CHAPS (Cow Herd Appraisal Performance System) program.

Since 1963, the NDBCIA has presented these annual evaluations as five-year rolling herd performance averages for several traits. The NDBCIA's purpose is the improvement of beef cattle by focusing on genetic improvement.

The association also is cognizant of the yearly management involved in beef cattle production. The benchmarks allow producers to compare their individual herd to the overall averages, allowing individual herd performance to be evaluated, discussed and, perhaps, methods of change proposed.

The comparison of numbers always needs to be done cautiously because we do not all walk in the same pair shoes. However, it is beneficial to know in which game we actually are playing. If we don't know what others are doing, we can stray.

Data trends also can be evaluated. In reviewing the yearly values for cow age, the cowherd is getting older. Calves are being weaned at an earlier age and at heavier weights.

Reproductive values are more positive. "Calf death loss" is down and "pounds weaned per cow exposed" still is holding above 500 pounds. That is good.

Growth and reproduction tend to be the mainstay of the beef business. Those involved in the NDBCIA CHAPS program excel. Growth, like in the feedlot business, is a major component of profit for the cow-calf producers.

The total pounds times the price contributes in a major way to the gross income. Cow-calf producers know good health programs are an integral part of reducing calf mortality and aiding in calf growth.

The bottom line dictates that cows make producers money by producing calves that have more value than expense. The value of the calf is determined principally by weight, but in contrast to the feedlot calf, the cow also must carry the burden of expense for cows that do not produce a calf.

While the open cow has a market value, the value will not cover the cost of replacing the cow. Therefore, each cow in the herd has to produce to cover her annual expenses and also the nonproducing cows.

The better the herd reproduction, the more likely the herd can cover expenses. As the NDBCIA evaluates traits to measure cow performance, “pounds weaned per cow exposed to the bull” is a trait that factors in both the management and genetics involved in a herd of cattle.

This is just an example of the many traits NDBCIA monitors through the use of the CHAPS program. Additional traits follow along with the current benchmark.

The average CHAPS producer exposed 218 cows to bulls. The cows had an average age of 5.7 years. Of the 218 cows exposed to the bull, 93.5 percent were pregnant in the fall, 92.9 percent calved in the spring and 90.9 percent weaned a calf in the fall.

During the calving season, 63.9 percent calved during the first 21 days, 88.9 percent during the first 42 days and 95.6 percent within the first 63 days of the calving season. On average, the calves were weaned at 189 days, weighed 565 pounds and had a frame score of 5.8.

These growth numbers translated into a 3.01-pound weight gain per day of age and a 639-pound adjusted 205-day weight. For every cow exposed, CHAPS producers weaned 505 pounds of calf.

Knowing these numbers allows for appropriate modification through management or genetics. There are no absolute answers to what a particular ranch should produce. The academic answer is optimization.

In reality, the need is to grow profitable cattle that a producer can appreciate and still meet industry needs. Each producer must answer the question, but the answer must be based on data that ultimately tells the producer if he or she is in the game.

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

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Attachments


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