

BeefTalk 509: The Burden Is on the Producer to Use the Right Tools

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Growth and average daily gain remain tops in the feed yard. Regardless of how and when growth is measured, cattle that grow are needed.

Growing cattle generate dollars to cover the daily upkeep and contribute to the income pool at the end of the day. The fixed costs of the beef business must be paid, but fixed costs can only be met once the variable costs are paid, which takes growth.

There is no question product quality is critical as well. However, that discussion is for another day. Why this discussion about growth?

The industry continues a longstanding history of discussion on cattle size. Cattle have increased and decreased body size subject to the needs of the beef industry.

More recently, producers again are questioning what direction to go and how best to make a buck in the beef business, but it takes more than a buck to survive. The bottom line is that mistakes are merciless. Income needs to exceed expenses.

The Dickinson Research Extension Center has two different sets of cows. Herd A averaged 1,406 pounds as the cattle were sorted to spring pasture. Herd B averaged 999 pounds. For discussion, let's say the cows averaged 1,400 and 1,000 pounds, respectively.

The two herds are not being maintained to directly compare the impact of cow size. However, maintaining and managing the two herds does bring up some good points. Obviously, the stocking rates based on Natural Resources Conservation Service guidelines and nutritional requirements based on National Research Council guidelines are met for both groups.

Interestingly, given all the debate or at least active discussion regarding what is the correct cow size, information is available on the proper management of the cow once the size is selected. In addition, if one keeps the end product in mind, that is efficient red meat production, the genetic component is quite manageable as well.

About the center's upcoming breeding season, several bulls have been picked to allow for the continuation of herds A and B. Herd A is a typical, heavily Angus-influenced herd.

The herd will be artificially inseminated by several Angus sires that are available commercially.

The average expected progeny difference (EPD) values for the bulls utilized are: (the average value for the bulls is listed first followed by the average for the Angus breed in parentheses)

For the common growth traits, the birth weight is 1.56 pounds (2.1 pounds), weaning weight 43 pounds (43 pounds) and yearling weight 81 pounds (79 pounds). For milk production, the bulls averaged 25 pounds (21 pounds).

For carcass traits, the carcass weight is 10 pounds (11 pounds), marbling 0.29 (.28), ribeye area 0.23 square inch (0.13 square inch) and back fat 0.03 inch (0.01 inches). The bull battery is pretty typical of Angus but with a bit more ribeye than average.

The herd B cows are bred naturally to Red Angus bulls. The average EPD values for the bulls utilized are: (the average value for the bulls is listed first followed by the average for the Red Angus breed in parentheses)

For the common growth traits, the birth weight is minus 2.8 pounds (minus 0.02 pound), weaning weight 28 pounds (32 pounds) and yearling weight 58 pounds (60 pounds). For milk production, the bulls averaged 21 pounds (17 pounds).

For carcass traits, the marbling is 0.19 (.06), ribeye area 0.23 square inch (0.05 square inch) and back fat 0.01 inch (0 inches). The herd B bull battery is considerably lower in birth weight and slightly lower in weaning and yearling weight compared with the average Red Angus bull but considerably above average for ribeye.

The impact on those cows that are smaller is less emphasis on growth but a stronger emphasis on muscle.

The tools are in the tool chest to manage cows for the chosen management plan. The burden is on the producer to use the correct tools.

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.

| Bull EPD and Breed Averages | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Dickinson Research Extension Center | | |
| Herd A, 1,400 pound cows, Angus bulls | | |
| | | Breed Average |
| Birth weight | 1.56 pounds | 2.1 pounds |
| Weaning weight | 43 pounds | 43 pounds |
| Yearling weight | 81 pounds | 79 pounds |
| Milk production | 25 pounds | 21 pounds |
| Carcass weight | 10 pounds | 11 pounds |
| Marbling | 0.29 | .28 |
| Ribeye area | 0.23 square inch | 0.13 square inch |
| Back fat | 0.03 inch | 0.01 inch |
| Herd B, 1,000 pound cows, Red Angus bulls | | |
| | | Breed Average |
| Birth weight | -2.8 pounds | -0.02 pounds |
| Weaning weight | 28 pounds | 32 pounds |
| Yearling weight | 58 pounds | 60 pounds |
| Milk production | 21 pounds | 17 pounds |
| Marbling | 0.19 | .06 |
| Ribeye area | 0.23 square inch | 0.05 square inch |
| Back fat | 0.01 inch | 0 inches |