navigation

Links

- News Home
- Columns
- Archives

Feeds

- All News RSS
- BeefTalk RSS
- Dairy Focus RSS
- Prairie Fare RSS
- Economics RSS
- Renewable Accounts RSS
- Small-business Savvy RSS

Twitter

- On Twitter follow NDSU Ag News

BeefTalk: Management and Genetics Make the Cow Whole

Good records help producers make good management decisions.

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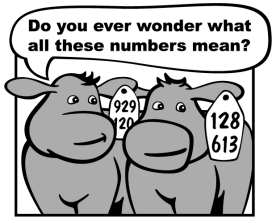

Do you ever wonder what all these numbers mean?

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

After listening to the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) annual meeting presentations through media services provided by Angus Media, many thoughts come to mind.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the annual gathering, which finished recently in Manhattan, Kan.

The focus of the federation and the meeting, as always, was the improvement of beef cattle. Many ideas were presented, some of which were quite data-specific and some totally speculative. Either

nd state fair

4-H State Fair Results

columns

Spotlight on Economics: **Spotlight on Economics: On the Road Again** (2016-05-25) The growth in vehicle miles traveled is important news for American farmers. FULL STORY

BeefTalk: **BeefTalk: Management and Genetics Make the Cow Whole** (2016-06-23) Good records help producers make good management decisions. FULL STORY

Prairie Fare: **Prairie Fare: Pack Some Healthful Fuel for Summer Road Trips** (2016-06-16) Bring some healthful snacks and an ice chest to keep perishable foods cold. FULL STORY

way, the meeting always generates good discussion and reflection.

Perhaps a point that underlies much of the discussion is the need for continued encouragement to keep records. That seems so simple, but in reality, many beef producers struggle with the implementation of effective recordkeeping systems. In response years ago, the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA), established in 1963, became a member of the Beef Improvement Federation.

Subsequently, beef cattle records have been the mainstay of the NDBCIA, which annually processes thousands of calf records for producers throughout North Dakota, the north-central region and across North America. These data records have been the basis for much discussion for producers through the years.

Evolving from this effort was the CHAPS (Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software). CHAPS is the computer program used to record, analyze and store the data. It was introduced in 1985. An update for CHAPS should be done this year because programming is intense right now.

While the data and numbers are important, the update is driven by changes in the electronic media. Computer programs always must be compatible with mainstream computing demands. CHAPS can be described as a beef industry tool for

Small-business Savvy: Small-business Savvy: To-do Lists and Time Management (2016-06-16) To-do lists can help you manage your time. FULL STORY

acquiring data and converting it to a usable form to expand a producer's knowledge.

Interestingly, at this year's BIF conference, the need to continue to gather records that guide producers in the management of their operation appeared to be discussed with more vigor. Although the improvement of the genetic component of beef cattle is the objective of the numerous beef cattle breed associations, genetic improvement is of no avail if managerial programs cannot facilitate or implement the desired genetics in the cow-calf operation.

CHAPS is a computer program that can track beef cattle production from conception to carcass, recording performance, genetics and meat quality along the way. The data then become management knowledge, which is the power to effect change within an individual beef producer's herd.

CHAPS was developed by the North Dakota State University Extension Service through the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association and has been time tested in many individual beef producer herds. The more documented records a producer has available through time in the herd, the better equipped the producer is to make bold, decisive decisions about culling, selection and mating systems.

Those managerial decisions made today can have

a huge impact on the future of the herd for many years to come. A change in management is only speculative unless documented and verified by data. Aggressive cattle producers competing in today's complex beef market need to utilize all the tools available to reduce guesswork and add predictability to their herd performance. CHAPS is one of those tools, providing multiple managerial reports and assisting producers with total herd evaluations.

A common problem with recordkeeping systems is the accumulation of mounds of data with little effective utilization of the data. The ultimate purpose of the CHAPS program is to assure that each production trait is balanced in the operation, and evaluated and reported in a usable manner.

For more effective utilization of individual herd data through time, production benchmark values utilizing standardized calculations based on total cows exposed have been used in CHAPS herds for more than 30 years. During this period, CHAPS producers have been able to compare their individual operation’s performance against the benchmarks that are calculated from the entire database.

As a comprehensive analysis system, CHAPS provides an analysis of all the standard performance data as suggested by the Beef Improvement Federation and additional benchmark comparisons. Producers continue to use the

program as an effective tool, and that complements the current discussion in BIF to better tie genetics to management for more predicable beef managerial planning. As complicated as current production environments are, CHAPS helps.

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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Attachments

PDF - Do you ever wonder what all these numbers mean?
(NDSU_Extension_Service_BeefTalk_062614.pdf - 30.14 Kb)

EPS - Do you ever wonder what all these numbers mean?
(NDSU_Extension_Service_BeefTalk_062614.eps -

199.19 Kb)