



## BeefTalk 665: Cow Diversity is a Good Thing and so is BIF

### SUPPORTING MATERIALS

#### Plan to Attend

The 2013 Beef Improvement Federation Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City on June 12-15, 2013!

Call the OSU Animal Science Department at (405) 744-9292 or email Megan Rolf at [mrolf@okstate.edu](mailto:mrolf@okstate.edu) for more information.

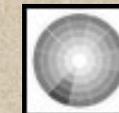
*The ability to produce uniform truckload lots of calves depends on producing and sorting the calves.*

Although uniformity is a tremendous asset in marketing, on the production side, uniformity brings challenges. In other words, the ability to produce uniform truckload lots of calves depends on producing and sorting the calves.

This may seem like a fall discussion, but this spring continues to be one of drought and swamp, so managers need to be somewhere in the middle. Unfortunately, the cow never gets to be in the middle. Dry, wet, hot, cold and wind are



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conditions cows seem to endure.

This time of year always brings some sadness when, at least in our mind, one of those good cows loses her calf. Every reason on earth and even under the sun is offered as an excuse because, as we all know, she was one of the better cows. Cows that come up empty, whether open all winter or losing a calf, all face the same fate of becoming market beef.

Is it their fault? I'm not sure. However, most producers will start looking for an extra twin calf to graft over to the cow that lost her calf. There is a lot of logic to grafting over one of the home-raised twins from another cow because some cows are not good mothers of twins.

Two recent sets of twins at the Dickinson Research Extension Center seemed to be doing well, but a keen eye notes that one calf seems to be lagging. Upon further observation, the calf was disowned. This was not a good thing and certainly an acknowledgement that death would soon follow.

So we graft by trying to find that good cow that seemingly lost her calf through no fault of her own. In a week or two, a new cow-calf pair emerges. As it is written or proclaimed by some but not so much by others, all cows will raise a calf. That's probably true, but is giving birth and losing the calf in less than ideal situations enough reason to sell a cow?

In the numbers world, it is. However, a coffee-table discussion on that topic would be long and tedious. In the end, personal choice will rule. However, for those raising bulls for the breeding market, some notations should be made about the efficacy of motherhood. Poor mothers certainly can produce sons that sire daughters that have the propensity to

be poor mothers as well.

Market beef income simply is one other avenue that generates revenue for the ranch and, in all honesty, does a good job of selecting those cows that don't seem to be able to keep their calf alive. An attachment, personal or otherwise, to any particular cow does not pay the bills, so it is best to use good cow selection criteria that will minimize disappointing outcomes.

Is there a particular selection trait or expected progeny differences for dry, wet, hot, cold and wind tolerance? Some would suggest longevity would be somewhat of an indicator, while others would say production output would be the best and simplest answer. In other words, the fittest are the ones that survive and produce. An index of sorts that pools several sources of input and predicts future performance also has proven to be good. The answers are there but finding them is difficult.

That brings to mind the upcoming meeting of the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF). The 2013 BIF Annual Research Symposium and Convention is June 12-15 in Oklahoma City. The Beef Improvement Federation is a longstanding association of all who desire to improve the genetics of beef cattle based on seedstock and commercial needs.

The dedicated BIF members are the drivers of beef cattle genetics, so the meeting presentations certainly impact cow-calf producers. A sampling of titles for the presentations include "Crossbreeding: considerations and alternatives in an evolving market," "Crossbreeding: one of the tools to increase profitability," "Genetic evaluation and selection: lost opportunities for improving profit," "Technology lag: is there a cost for failing to do it right?" "Management practices of developing heifers that affect lifetime productivity" and "Addressing cowherd efficiency in a world of mixed messages for producers: matching production levels to environmental conditions."

There are many more great presentations, so while pondering what cow to cull, call the Oklahoma State University's Animal Science Department in Stillwater at (405) 744-9292 or email Megan Rolf at [mrolf@okstate.edu](mailto:mrolf@okstate.edu) for more information.

The everyday genetic decisions that cattle producers make ultimately impact all cattle producers, so why not visit BIF and learn more?

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.

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