



BeefTalk 699: CHAPS Herd Benchmarks

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Current CHAPS Production Benchmarks	
Number exposed	249 cows
Average cow age	5.6 years
Pregnancy percentage	93.6%
Calving percentage	93.0%
Weaning percentage	90.7%
Calving 1st 21 days	62.8%
Calving 1st 42 days	88.0%
Calving 1st 63 days	95.9%
Average weaning age	190 days
Average weaning weight	558 lbs
Average frame score	5.7
Weight gain per day	3.0 lbs.
Pounds weaned per cow exposed	499 lbs.
Replacement percentage	15.3%
Culling percentage	13.5%

The beef business is a long-term business, and producers need to gauge their production against solid indicators that can help them set or modify production goals.

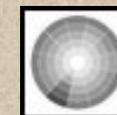
Performance in the beef business is evaluated by reviewing the overall herd. If there are indications that overall herd performance needs to be addressed, the first step is to compare the herd's performance with a benchmark to gauge what is normal. Understanding normal, or in this case average, performance allows producers to better understand how to guide the herd.

Change often is assumed because day-to-day news tends to imply that change is a given. However, the cattle industry is established, so in many cases, producers are striving more for maintaining current production rather than change. Change just to change makes no sense and will lead to costs that do not need to be incurred.

The North Dakota State University Extension Service, through the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA), calculates typical performance of beef cattle herds by analyzing those herds that utilize the Cow Herd Appraisal of Performance Software (CHAPS) program.



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The Extension Service has been keeping records since 1963 through the NDBCIA and presents these annual evaluations as five-year rolling benchmark values for average herd performance for several traits. Although individual year averages are good, the concept of a rolling five-year average provides a firmer benchmark by buffering quick jumps or slumps in the data.

The beef business is a long-term business, and producers need to gauge their production against solid indicators that can help them set or modify production goals. The purpose of NDBCIA is the improvement of beef cattle primarily by focusing on genetic improvement and being very cognizant of the yearly management that is involved in a beef cattle

operation.

Through the years, producers compare their individual herd values to the overall averages to allow for individual herd performance to be evaluated, discussed and perhaps methods of change proposed. Much like set personal goals, the group benchmarks allow producers to set goals and have a set of numbers to guide their goals.

Although there are no absolute right answers, an appreciation of what others are doing helps producers evaluate their individual situations. If we never know what others are doing, we can stray.

Current trends are evaluated through the CHAPS data set and rolling five-year benchmark values are generated. These values are rounded off to the nearest percent for simplicity.

The first thought regarding overall herd performance should involve herd reproduction. In today's world of high costs, poor herd reproduction will not allow the herd to cover expenses.

The typical CHAPS producer had roughly 94 percent of the exposed cows pregnant in the fall and 93 percent calved in the spring. In the fall, roughly 91 percent of the cows exposed weaned a calf. During a typical calving season, 63 percent calved during the first 21 days, 88 percent during the first 42 days and 96 percent within the first 63 days of the calving season. These cows had an average age of 5.6 years.

On average, the calves were weaned at 190 days, weighed 558 pounds and had a frame score of 5.7. These growth numbers translated into almost 3 pounds of weight gain per day, with typical average daily gains for CHAPS calves at 2.5 pounds per day. The adjusted 205-day weight was 630 pounds.

As the NDBCIA evaluates traits to measure cow performance, the trait "pounds weaned per cow exposed to the bull" is a trait that factors into 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. For every cow exposed, typical CHAPS producers weaned almost 500 pounds of calf.

Knowing these numbers allows for an appropriate herd modification through management or genetics. There are no absolute answers to what a particular ranch should produce. However, as cattle producers approach spring and are replacing bulls, knowing how the herd performs certainly is an advantage.

If poor performance is evident, obvious managerial issues must be resolved. After that, a good look at the overall ranch environment is needed and a decision made if the genetics of the herd fit that environment.

Thus, the world of buying bulls: Each producer must answer questions, but the answers must be based on data that tell a producer the actual status of the operation.

Have fun buying bulls.

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.

