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BeefTalk: Step 1 for Bull Buying: Simmental Example



The baseline traits used are simple growth traits that meet my "touchy, feely" criteria.

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist
NDSU Extension Service

The bull pen evaluations continue at the Dickinson Research Extension Center.

This week, the Simmental bulls are up for inspection.

Like last week, let's start by reviewing bulls used during the breeding season. Be sure the bull registration numbers are correct and the breeding inventories are updated with the culls from the previous breeding season noted.

The center's expected progeny difference (EPD) values need to be kept current. In reviewing the Simmental bulls, their individual EPDs had changed, but not dramatically. As the owner, only the most

Images

Bull Pen: Simmental Line Up

EPD values for 2014 Purebred Simmental bulls and the Dickinson Research Extension Center Simmental bulls:

	Simmental 50 Percentile	DREC Average
Birth weight	2.0 pounds	2.4 pounds
Weaning weight	64 pounds	76 pounds
Yearling weight	92 pounds	108 pounds
Milk production	23 pounds	23 pounds
Rib eye area	.77 square inches	.85 square inches
Marbling	-.23 unit of marbling score	-.20 unit of marbling score

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Simmental Line
Up

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current EPD values are kept. Previous EPD values for individual bulls mean nothing, so they should be discarded and never revisited.

At the center, values for the current bulls are entered into a simple spreadsheet to allow for easy tracking. The breeding inventory and registration numbers from this past breeding season included five bulls. Their year of birth and registration numbers are: 2013-born bulls, 2790504, 2790544, 2800373 and 2800393; and 2012-born bull, 2669482.

The searching procedure on the Simmental Association's website (<http://simmental.org/site/index.php>) is very simple. Type in the registration numbers or cut and paste all the numbers at once after following the "animal search" tab on the association's home page.

As noted last week, I like to start with the basic growth traits, which are those "touchy, feely" kinds of traits that connect what I see in the cattle to what the data is trying to tell me.

Sometimes producers are so excited, they jump into the database without really understanding the basics, which is like jumping into deep water without adequate swimming lessons. Start at the shallow end and wade in.

A full appreciation of the simpler traits allows one to accept them. As time goes on, accepting more complicated traits becomes easier. Trusting the

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simple data is important when applying the more complicated data through one's selection efforts in determining the operation's genetic focus.

The center's Simmental bull evaluation is much like the Red Angus bull evaluation. The baseline traits used for both are simple growth traits and meet my "touchy, feely" criteria. The four EPD traits are birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight and rib-eye area.

In addition, I usually list the milk and marbling EPDs as tag-along traits because they have huge impacts within the genetics of the beef business.

The average DREC Simmental EPD values for these traits were obtained by looking up the bull's registration number and writing down the current values for the Simmental bulls and then putting the values in a spreadsheet.

For the center's Simmental bulls, the average EPD value for birth weight is 2.4 pounds, weaning weight is 76 pounds, yearling weight is 108 pounds, milk production is 23 pounds, rib-eye area is .95 square inch and marbling is .05 unit of marbling score.

How does the center's average Simmental genetic input compare with Simmental bulls within the breed? Like the Red Angus bulls, one needs to start by looking at the average EPD values for 2014 purebred Simmental bulls on the Simmental Association's website.

The Simmental 50 percent EPD value for birth weight is 2 pounds, weaning weight is 64 pounds, yearling weight is 92 pounds, milk production is 23 pounds, rib-eye area is .77 square inch and marbling is .13 unit of marbling score.

As one compares the average genetic values for the center's Simmental bulls to the 50 percentile values from the Simmental Association's sire summary, the center's bulls have slightly heavier birth weight EPDs by 0.4 pound, heavier weaning weight by 12 pounds and heavier yearling weight by 16 pounds.

The center's bulls have the ability to sire heifers that maintain pounds at weaning through milk because the center's bulls are essentially at the 50 percentile of the breed (only .1 pound less milk EPD).

For carcass traits, the center's Simmental bulls have .18 additional square inch of rib-eye EPD value. However, the center's Simmental bulls have a .08 less EPD value for marbling score.

The evaluations are complete and managerial thoughts have been provoked, so it's time to tweak the bull lineup just a bit.

More next time.

May you find all your ear tags.

For more information, contact Ringwall at 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to

 <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/news/columns/beeftalk/>.

(Ringwall is a North Dakota State University Extension Service livestock specialist and the Dickinson Research Extension Center director.)

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source:	Kris Ringwall, (701) 456-1103, ✉kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu
editor:	Rich Mattern, (701) 231-6136, ✉richard.mattern@ndsu.edu

Attachments



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EPS - Bull Pen: Simmental Line Up

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