

Questions and Answers

Q: Can you compare different breed EPD's?

At this time, there is no way to compare between breeds. Each breed uses the performance data ratios in their own breed to compute EPD's, so each breed EPD is unique for progeny difference within that breed.

Q: Are actual weights used to calculate EPD's?

No. Actual weights are not used, but ratios of actual weights between or among sire's progeny are used to eliminate environmental differences in actual weights. When purebred breeders weigh calves, it is important to weigh several at one time with at least two different sires represented to establish comparisons.

Q: Do I always need to select a bull with the highest milk (EPD)?

No, not at all. Some breeds are noted for more milk than others and all must be matched for the forage conditions and environment where they are produced. Remember, the trait average for milk is 0, so average sires of the breed still milk good. Being below average, or -5 in some breeds, is not all bad if a commercial producer has excellent milk in his cows. If cows milk too much, they lose too much weight and don't breed back. That's as bad as not milking enough, unless the producer wants to supplement energy (corn) fed to the cows. Generally selecting 0 or above is a good guide to follow.

Q: What is the average birth weight and weaning weight in the different breeds?

No absolute breed average exists for weaning weight or any other trait because of management and environmental differences. For example, birth weights run 10 to 20 lbs. lower in the south than in the north. U.S. EPD's predict progeny differences in performance rather than averages of a breed or sire.

Q: I'm interested in yearling weight but also want no calving problems. Should I be concerned with a yearling wt. EPD of +60 and a birth wt. of +9?

The yearling weight EPD is fine but there may be problems with a +9 on birth weight. All breeds are different but EPD selection should be based on breed, class of cattle (heifers or mature cows) and will also vary with environmental conditions. A +4 may be fine for heifers on one farm and breed and not on another.

Q: Is a bull's individual performance used for EPD or is EPD based entirely on pedigree?

The information used to calculate an EPD can come from several sources- the animal's own performance, ancestor records (through the sire and dam), paternal and maternal half-sibs and progeny records. Each source is appropriately weighted by how far back in the pedigree the information comes from. Once a sire has progeny, then less emphasis is placed on pedigree information. The sire's own performance and the performance records of his progeny become the major determinates of the EPD.

Q: What should I use as my criteria for selecting a bull?

Before you can plot a course for the future, you must know where you are and where you are going. And, in deciding which bulls to use, you must first set forth what you want those bulls to do for you. For example, if your calves are sold at weaning and no replacement females are retained, then primary consideration should be given to weaning weight. However, if steer calves are sold and replacement heifers are retained, then a balance between weaning weight and milk production must be considered.

Another situation involving retained ownership of steers with no replacement females retained would indicate that primary consideration should be given to yearling weight. In other words, the bull you decide to use should be matched to the situation that exists in your operation. By using sire evaluation data, you can select sires that fulfill your needs.