

Production and Management Tips for Beef Producers

October 20, 2019



Eldon Cole, Livestock Specialist, P.O. Box 388, Mt. Vernon, MO 65712
(417) 466-3102 or colee@missouri.edu or <http://muextension.missouri.edu/lawrence>

EPD REVIEW

The 94th Southwest Missouri Beef Cattle Improvement Association's Performance Tested bull sale is October 28, 7 pm at the Springfield Livestock Marketing Center. The sale is small, 35 Angus and 2 Red Angus, but there are some excellent EPDs on the bulls.

Even though we've been hitting the value of EPDs as being nine times better in predicting differences in bulls, there's a few who need reminding to use EPD's instead of looks and adjusted weights.

For example, I've picked out a couple of Angus bulls to show how to compare expected differences in their progeny. I'm starting out with calving ease direct (CED).

Bull A has a CED of 14 and Bull B has a 7. The difference is 7. This means Bull A will have 7 percent fewer assisted births than Bull B when bred to similar, first-calf heifers. It doesn't tell you how many heifers will need an assist, it just tells you the difference between the two bulls.

The Angus breed also has a birth weight EPD which is a big part of the calving ease value. I prefer to focus on the CED only since it has birth weight as a major factor in its calculation. Either of these two EPDs are of greater predictive value than adjusted birth weight.

Let's now look at weaning weight EPD's. Again, Bull A's is 80 lbs. while Bull B's is 50 lbs. The difference in the two is 30 lbs. This means if the two bulls were bred to a similar set of females that were managed alike, the average 205 day weaning weight difference would be 30 lbs. The EPD does not predict the 205 wt., just the difference. For example, on a poorly managed farm A's calves might wean at 485 lbs. And B's would be 455 lbs. Or if a farm had great forage and excellent cows selected for growth over generations the weights might be 710 lbs. and 680 lbs.

I emphasize that in reality not every calf will be exactly 30 lbs. difference, it's the average. The other point is each EPD has an accuracy value, based on the animal's performance values, relatives data and DNA information. Accuracy values on young bulls may range from 0.25 up to 0.45 or even higher. Highly used, AI bulls with thousands of progeny could have accuracies approaching 0.99.

If you don't like taking risks on young, low-accuracy bulls plan to AI as much as you can. Bulls that have EPD accuracies in the 0.90 and up range are low-risk, can't miss sires.

Whether it's at our SW MO BCIA sale, a breeder's sale or selecting an AI bull, force yourself to compare the "Differences" in the bulls you are considering. If a bull meets your specifications you can afford to pay more for him than you think.

COW ENERGY VALUE - \$EN

For several years we've been hearing cow owners say their cows are bigger than they should be for efficient production of calves. The Angus Association has a Cow Energy Value EPD. You may have never used it and we don't include it in our bull sale catalog, but maybe we will some day.

The Angus sire evaluation report describes their EPD as \$EN. It is expressed in dollars saved per cow, per year in daughters of sires. A larger value is more favorable when you compare two bulls' heifer offspring.

Let's compare A and B bulls for \$EN. A has an EPD of 15 while bull B is poorer at -5. If you do the math, there is a difference of 20 which means the daughters of A will save \$20 per heifer or cow per year in cow energy costs. Here are the factors, (EPD's) that are involved in the \$EN, lactation energy requirements and energy costs associated with size differences in mature cows.

In short, big, heavy milking cows will have a higher feed cost annually in general. How big is too big? We've touched on this before and some big cows may be very efficient while some smaller framed, lighter cows may be inefficient. I'm asked quite a bit about what's the ideal size of cow to run in this area? My reply is, one that's in the 5-frame range, weighing 1200 up to 1400 lbs. at maturity.

In defense of cows with more milk and more weight, they should raise heavier calves and the cow's salvage value is greater. For years the sale toppers at feeder calf sales has

been medium to large frame calves. Packers as well as cattle feeders like harvest weights in the 1300 lbs. range. As a rule that coincides with a cow's mature weight.

Desired weights and frame sizes have long been a topic of discussion and it changes. Finding the perfect size is up to your own desire based on the quantity and quality of your feed/forage supply. Don't make them too big or let them get short and dumpy like they were in the 60's when I arrived in southwest Missouri.

FEEDOUT WEIGH-IN-GRADING CLINIC

The weigh-in program for the 80 head of steers entered in the 2019-20 Missouri Steer Feedout will be November 5, 6 pm at Joplin Regional Stockyards. Nine different owners will have steers for you to evaluate along with the experts.

Earlier in the afternoon a Missouri Market Reporter will have graded the calves and placed a market value on them. After supper each set of steers will come through the ring for a critique by each segment in the marketing chain.

You'll be given information on breed makeup, weight, feeder grades and the likes and dislikes of the panel. It's an excellent opportunity for newcomers to the cattle business.

After the groups are evaluated they head to an Iowa feedlot for finishing next spring. They'll be slaughtered and carcass data collected to determine the true worth of each.

The event begins with supper at 6 pm. It is jointly sponsored by the Southwest Missouri Cattlemen's Association, University of Missouri Extension and Joplin Regional Stockyards. In addition, Joplin FCS Financial is hosting a coat drive to benefit foster children in southwest Missouri. You may bring a donation for the collection box and FCS will again have free pie. Contact the University of Missouri Extension Center, Mt. Vernon 417-466-3102.

REMOVE FLY TAGS

Please remember when you're working cattle this fall to remove the old fly tags. They're sure used up by now and the retained tags are a factor in insect resistance to the various chemicals used in the tags.

BEEF CATTLE WORKSHOP

On October 29, 1 pm at the University of Missouri Southwest Research Center, Mt. Vernon you have a chance to learn about the selection and development of beef replacement heifers. You'll hear from state specialists Eric Bailey and Jordan Thomas in the class room then we go to the beef barn area and walk through the Center's replacement heifers. See enclosure.

SHOW-ME-SELECT HEIFERS

The next Show-Me-Select bred heifer sale will be November 15th at Joplin Regional Stockyards. Sale time is 7 pm. Consignment numbers are down with only 190 head consigned. I'm not exactly sure why numbers are down but it's the same story in other SMS sales.

I tend to blame last year's dry weather and shortages of hay and pasture. Many sold old cows and maybe even some heifer calves they might normally keep. Now after this year's wet weather and plenty of forage they're keeping some they might normally have developed for SMS.

Even though numbers are down, the quality remains at a high level. The black baldy numbers are still high and there are several reds and red baldies also.

At the time I'm writing this we've only had calving surveys from the May sale from 6 buyers, all repeat customers, representing 28 head. All of the calves were born unassisted including a set of twins. The buyers gave their satisfaction rating on all 28 of the heifers a 1, the highest rating possible.

One of the big "likes" buyers of SMS heifers tell us is the closeness of actual calving dates to what the veterinarian had predicted at the 90 day or earlier call. The surveys on the May sale averaged 12 days between the predicted and actual. All of the calves were born earlier than expected, likely due to hot weather, calving ease sires and fall calving.

The secrets to accurate calving date calls are: preg check before 90 days; use AI; use ultrasound; and have a veterinarian with experience calling more than just open 3rd stage, 2nd stage, etc. A number of veterinarians are well over 90% accuracy. I consider it an accurate call if the calf is born less than 18 days from the vet's call.

DAIRY TO BEEF

Last month a meeting at the SW Center focused on the trend of moving from a dairy enterprise to a beef operation. Joe Horner, state extension specialist for dairy and beef had several good one-liners. Here's a sample.

- Think pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed for breeding. 80 to 85% pregnancy rate is decent, 90% is hard to achieve.
- If you have high quality feed, put it in a high quality animal.
- If you're considering renting land, the annual rate per acre is about 1½% of the land value per acre.
- If you want to live poor and die rich, stay with beef.
- Beef cows are a primary marketing vehicle in North America for low-quality roughages.