

The Range Review

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Upcoming Events:

Cattlemen’s Meeting
Bradford County
Sign-up
October 8, 2009

Sheep/Goat Wksp.
Alachua County
October 13, 2009

Beef Cattle Marketing Workshop
Western Steer
November 3, 2009

Cattlemen’s Meeting
November 12, 2009

Cattlemen’s Meeting
December 10, 2009

- For more information, call 904-966-6224

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October/November/December 2009

Howdy from the Bradford County Extension Office!!!

Summer is winding down and most folks are preparing for the fall and winter. Hopefully you were able to store enough hay in the barn to satisfy your upcoming needs. If you haven’t had your hay tested to determine it’s quality, I encourage you to do so prior to feeding supplements. Hay quality is an important factor when determining your nutrient needs for your cow herd. Knowing your hay quality will help you to save money by feeding less supplement over the winter. The less supplement you have to provide equals more money in your pocket. Also remember to test your soils. Testing your soils now can help you determine how much lime you need to add to your pastures as well as the proper N-P-K needs.

The Range Review is moving into the digital age. To save on paper (thinking GREEN) and postage, this newsletter will be emailed to all recipients that provide their email. However, for those who prefer a paper copy, we will continue to mail a hard copy. This is the final call—in order to stay on my mailing list. Please fill-out the enclosed purge slip and send it back to my office or call (904 - 964 - 6224) at your convenience. If you haven’t contacted us regarding this newsletter, this will be your last issue.

If you would like to attend any of the programs listed in this newsletter or, if you have any questions related to livestock and forages, please feel free to give me a call at any time.

Timothy W. Wilson

Timothy W. Wilson
County Extension Director
Livestock and Forages



UNDERSTANDING EPDs

Expected progeny difference (EPDs) is the genetic description of a bull derived from data not only from its calves, but also from its ancestors and full and half siblings. Although EPDs provide an excellent genetic description of a bull, many producers have difficulty understanding what they mean and how to use them.

EPD values provide a description of how a bull has performed genetically for each trait. In a typical EPD, growth traits such as birth weight (BW), weaning weight (WW), yearling weight (YW) and Milk are always reported (Table 1).

These values are compared to the breed average (Table 2) to determine if they are high or low compared to the average bull in that breed. Breed associations usually report updated breed averages in six month intervals. Breed average EPD values for each breed may differ from one another.

The accuracy value is reported numerically between zero and one. When a large number of progeny have been reported to a breed association, the accuracy values will move closer to one. These values can be viewed as a percentage. For example, a value of 0.39 could be seen as 39% accurate while a 0.98 could be viewed as 98% accurate. A low accuracy value indicates that a sire may be young or that few calves have been reported to the breed association. As the EPD value is adjusted to more accurately define the capabilities of the bull, the accuracy values increases.

If the EPDs listed in Table 1 for Bull A were for an Angus bull, how would he compare to his breed average for birth weight (BW)? He has a BW EPD of 2.1 with 0.98 (98%) accuracy. When comparing the BW EPD of 2.1 to the breed average of 2.6, Bull A would be expected to produce calves with lower birth weights than the average bull in the Angus breed ($2.1 - 2.6 = -0.5$ or 0.5 lbs lower than the breed average). It is important to consider the accuracy value for BW EPDs, especially when selecting a sire that will breed heifers. Since Bull A has an accuracy value of 0.98 or 98%, it can be expected that this bull will have birth weights close to the value being reported.

If Bull A was Charolais rather than Angus, the results would differ from those in the first example. Using the same 2.1 BW EPD, this value is more than the Charolais breed average of 1.4 which would result in calves from Bull A weighing 0.7 lbs more than the average bull in the Charolais breed ($2.1 - 1.4 = +0.7$ lbs).

In summary, EPDs are an excellent means to evaluate the expected genetic potential of a sire. Producers who use EPDs must consider that they are designed to predict expected and not actual performance. Multiple trait selection helps prevent negative traits from impacting overall herd performance. Although structural soundness and breeding soundness has not been discussed in this article, they should not be excluded in the sire selection process.

Table 1. Bull A

Trait	BW	WW	YW	Milk
EPD	2.1	55	69	13
Acc	0.98	0.98	0.97	0.88

Table 2. Breed Averages (*data from 2003*)

	BW	WW	YW	Milk
Angus	2.6	36	66	18
	BW	WW	YW	Milk
Charolais	1.4	20	34	6

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Beef Management Calendar

October / November

- Check hay stores and start planning winter needs
- Begin or finish planting winter pastures
- Check commodity prices and purchase when prices are low
- Check water and mineral supplies
- Evaluate body condition
- Hay Test
- Soil Test
- Check for lice and treat
- Cull non-pregnant cattle

November / December

- Check mineral feeders and water supply to make sure cattle have free-choice access
- Breeding Soundness Exams on bulls
- Begin calving season—Check pregnant cattle often for calves
- Record the date, weight and cow ID of calves
- Tag, dehorn, castrate and implant bull calves
- Vit-A supplementation if feeding frosted grass or weathered hay
- Soil Test

(Source: Silcox and McCann)