

Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

Lots to think about

Never a disappointment, the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Annual Meeting and Research Symposium provided a lot of fodder to think about. Here's a quick glimpse of some of the topics discussed at the July 10-13 conference in Omaha, Neb. Listen to the speeches yourself or read the proceedings papers by visiting our real-time coverage of the event at www.BIFconference.com.

A cow maintenance EPD

John Evans, Oklahoma State University, outlined a prototype expected progeny difference (EPD) for cow maintenance energy requirements completed for the Red Angus breed. The EPD is expressed in megacalories (Mcal) per year.

The current EPD formula uses equations from the current version of the National Research Council guidelines for beef cattle nutrition, along with mature weight and milk EPDs. In the future, Evans said, the formula may be refined with other indicator traits, such as body condition, visceral organ size and cell-level indicators of maintenance energy requirements.

Aussies taking the lead

Australian researchers have developed an estimated breeding value (EBV) to aid selection for net feed intake (NFI), reported David Johnston, University of New England, New South Wales. Results suggest selection for reduced NFI may enhance efficiency achieved by animals that are genetically able to eat less, without reducing growth.

Individual feed needs

Cornell University's Danny Fox explained the Cornell Value Discovery System (CVDS), which estimates feed requirements for individuals in a pen-feeding system. The computer model accounts for variations in breed type, management and environment as it determines the amount of specific feed ration needed to reach a target final weight and finish. Cornell is beta-testing the CVDS software Version 1.0.0, available via e-mail to Michelle Cole at mlc44@cornell.edu.

Cattle can be profitable

South Dakota State University's Barry Dunn described the beef industry as a mature industry with a low return on assets (ROA). While U.S. businesses average 10% ROA, cattle enterprises average 2%-3%. That more than anything, he said, is the reason more than half of the industry's producers exited the business in the last 30 years.

Dunn provided an overview of Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) measurements for low-, moderate- and high-profit cow herds. The ROA for the

bottom 16% averaged -15.5%, while the middle 68% averaged 2.9%. The top 16%, however, averaged an ROA of 18.2%.

Defining efficiency

Virginia Tech's David Notter defined biological efficiency as "the capacity to convert physical inputs (feed) into marketable product (beef) under prevailing production conditions." Traits that support biological efficiency in the brood cow are generally different from those associated with efficient postweaning calf growth, Notter admitted. Improved forage utilization and reproductive performance will enhance cow efficiency, while efficiency in the growing market animal is achieved through a balance of appetite and lean growth potential.

Congratulations to award winners

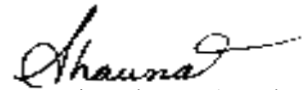
Several Association members were recognized at the BIF meeting:

Circle A Ranch, Iberia, Mo., was named Seedstock Producer of the Year.

BIF honored Martin and Mary Jorgensen, Ideal, S.D., with the Pioneer Award. The award recognizes individuals who have made lasting contributions to the improvement of beef cattle.

Honored with BIF's Continuing Service Award were Angus members S.R. Evans Jr., Greenwood, Miss., and Galen Fink, Manhattan, Kan. Evans was also elected vice president of the organization.

Richard McClung of Wehrmann Angus Ranch, New Market, Va., was elected president of BIF. Bill Bowman, director of performance programs for the American Angus Association, and Frank Felton, Maryville, Mo., were elected to BIF's board of directors.



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