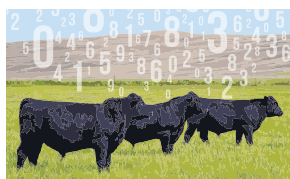


BY THE NUMBERS



by AGI staff

It starts with good data reporting

“The idea of contemporary grouping is the underpinning of what we do in genetic evaluation. If we mess up the contemporary group, we mess it up for the entire group and the estimates of all the rest of the animals related to that contemporary group.”

That quote was given by Bob Weaber, Kansas State University (K-State) animal sciences and industry professor and Extension specialist, earlier this summer at the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Annual Meeting and Research Symposium in Loveland, Colo.

The industry has come a long way from the first introduction of

contemporary groups, and now producers manage more tools than they can count from genomic testing to selection indexes. Although, forgoing the simple acts of correctly collecting and reporting phenotypes (performance data) to the American Angus Association can lead to suspect predictions at best. The good news is Association members

as a whole do a great job of data reporting, but it is always good to revisit the basics.

Creating contemporary groups

A contemporary group is defined as a group of cattle of the same breed composition and sex, similar in age, and raised under the same

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management conditions. The Association will automatically break males and females apart when data are sent for processing. Animals of similar age will also be broken

into differing contemporary groups automatically, unless a member places an additional birth group code on animals.

Other management codes can be placed on groups of calves that are truly managed differently at birth, weaning, yearling or ultrasound processing. For instance, when splitting animals into correct weaning contemporary groups, forage quality could help define these. If you are managing two pastures 60 miles apart with forages of differing nutritional levels, grouping those sets of calves separately would be a good choice.

However, if you split a group of cow-calf pairs, for example, for breeding purposes, and they are on adjacent pastures with the same nutritional value, those calves can more than likely be grouped together. If you have calves that were given extra care or feed (i.e. show/sale cattle), these animals should not be grouped with the larger cohort.

Adjusting weights

Performance recording programs are set up with the realization a spread in age of the group will exist when calves are weaned and weighed. In order to place every

Table 1: Data collection trait and age window

Trait	Age Window	Trait	Optimal Window
Weaning weights	120-280 d	Foot Scoring	12-18 months; mature females
Yearling Weights	320-440 d	Docility	320-440 d
Yearling Hip Height	320-440 d	Mature Weights	Collect +/- 45 days weaning
Scrotal Circumference	320-440 d	Mature Hip Heights	
Carcass Ultrasound Scans	Bulls: 320-440 d Heifers: 320-460 d Steers: 320-460 d	Body Condition Scores	

animal on an even playing field, these weights are standardized.

While it's time to gear up for weaning, it is important producers collect weaning weights when the group average day of age is as close to 205 days as possible. The standard is to adjust weights up or down based on the age of dam and days of age of the calf.

Even though this standardization takes place, producers need to do their best to take weights as close to 205 days of age as possible. Taking weights too early or too late negates the overall effectiveness of that standardization; and therefore, some producers may experience larger-than-average adjustments up or down. This can hinder the effectiveness to predict true genetic merit of those individuals.

Report all the data

When collecting weaning weights, collect and report weights on the entire group, even if some calves will not be registered. Breeders may be tempted to economize by recording only the better-performing calves within their herd. They may worry recording data on poorer-performing calves will reflect unfavorably on

their herd. Both of these conclusions are incorrect.

Unless performance data are submitted on every calf born in a herd, subsequent genetic

evaluations will be based on less information and consequently will be less accurate than would otherwise have been possible. Even worse, genetic evaluations may be biased. If only calves with good performance are reported, they may not get the credit they truly deserve.

Good data reporting

The genetic evaluation that predicts the membership's weekly expected progeny differences (EPDs) is only as good as the data behind it. Good data reporting will remain paramount to continue to make genetic progress. When getting ready to collect data, remember these few tips:

1. Plan ahead. Collect data to fit the contemporary group guidelines.
2. Break up contemporary groups properly. Cattle managed together are grouped together.
3. Report data on the whole contemporary group.

For more information on data collection and reporting, feel free to contact the Association at 816-383-5100. [A](#)

A contemporary group is defined as a group of cattle of the same breed composition and sex, similar in age, and raised under the same management conditions.
