



# Performance 101: Understanding the Numbers

Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) are not new, but as more and more numbers are included and indexes are added, what was meant to be a tool can become completely overwhelming. From reader and member requests for more information on EPDs, it's clear this selection tool is not completely understood. In this issue we set out to help close the gap of knowledge between producers and those who develop and calculate EPDs.

"EPDs offer beef producers a tremendous opportunity to improve genetics within their herds," says Scott Greiner, Virginia Tech Extension animal scientist. "With the vast number of EPDs that are available for use, selection goals must be carefully established to determine which EPDs are of primary importance. Additionally, EPDs should be combined with other selection criteria, including structural and reproductive

soundness, to determine which sires are most suitable for the operation."

Advances in genetic evaluation technology are important for the betterment of the breed. I don't like to admit it, but I'm old enough to say I lived through the performance and data collection "revolution." In my younger years, collecting performance data was not the standard. I remember when my dad decided to participate in the American Polled Hereford Association (APHA) young sire test program and, thus, started collecting

birth, weaning and yearling data to submit to the APHA Guidelines Program. We purchased a scale and haven't looked back.

With the implementation of Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR™) in 2000, our breed took a big step. With that commitment, we now have a dependable, predictable database that allows the breed to research and develop profit (\$) indexes and traits such as heifer calving rate and survivability (see Page 26).

It's exciting to think that a global Hereford evaluation is a possibility in the near future. One step closer is the Pan-American Cattle Evaluation, which at press time was set to be released. These projects will allow U.S. breeders to compare their cattle with a wider population and encourage more sampling of genetics from other countries.

Hopefully this issue will provide more insight into the world of performance data. But, if you have questions, don't hesitate to ask other breeders about how they use data in their selection program, or contact your American Hereford Association fieldman (see Page 4). He can help you or direct you toward resources to help you feel more comfortable with the "numbers." **HW**

## Celebrating 100 Years of Hereford Publishing

This month we continue to commemorate the 100th year of Hereford publishing. Here are some of the highlights printed in the Aug. 1, 1910, issue:

- The lead article, "Herefords Best for the West," discussed how Herefords are superior as rustlers and make the best cross. The article by W.A. Morgan said it is more profitable as well as better for the consumer, packer and producer to produce a 1,200 lb. steer in 24-28 months compared to a 2,000-2,400 lb. steer in four to six years, and Herefords are the best at that purpose.
- A graphic on Page 3 said, "Why are Herefords better than other breeds of beef cattle? Answer: Because they are more hardy, more healthy, more prolific, are better rustlers, they mature earlier on the same amount of feed, they sell higher as feeders, and they sell higher when finished beef."

- C.R. Thomas, American Hereford Cattle Breeders' Association

secretary, shared some "don'ts" with subscribers. A sampling of his suggestions included: "1) Don't mistreat your cattle by not feeding and watering them properly and then expect them to give good results. 2) Don't expect your cattle to be good to you unless you are good to them. 3) Don't fail to keep some kind of private herd register in which to enroll each calf at the time it dropped. To depend upon your memory is a bad policy. 4) Don't think your cattle have reached perfection but strive to make them better."

— Angie Stump Denton, editor

