

The Elusive Average

Sometimes the calculated average is the farthest number from the true average.



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I have spent the past few weeks reflecting (and writing) on the Annual Meeting. Something which most impressed me during that fleeing weekend is our determination to keep progressing as a breed, particularly when it comes to data collection. It was evident all of you take great pride in our data. Our vision for the future of Team Hereford is one worthy of rivaling that of Woodrow F. Call.

I walked away from the Annual Meeting believing wholeheartedly in the importance of continuing to collect complete and accurate data. I realize data collection is much easier said than done, but with that said, I happen to know a thing or two about collecting and analyzing numbers on a daily basis.

Manipulating averages

I have had Type 1 Diabetes for almost 24 years. By the time I was in middle school, I was pretty comfortable guesstimating my blood sugar levels without actually testing them. I was also at the age where I had to prove to my parents I could manage my blood sugars on my own.

A tool my parents and I used to track my numbers was the 30-day average function on my blood glucose meter. All it took was one high blood sugar to skew those numbers. I soon came up with some rules of thumb to manipulate those averages: Never test within an hour after a meal, especially one loaded with carbohydrates. If I sensed my blood sugar was in the 300s, I would give myself a generous bolus of insulin and let it work its magic transporting sugar from my blood and into my cells. About an hour after a dosage was usually ample time to see a better reading.

On the flip side, my policy for a low blood sugar was to test every five minutes. Any situation with the potential to lower my numbers — like exercise or extreme temperatures —

meant more opportunities to test and lower those averages on my meter.

When I visited my endocrinologist, my hemoglobin A1C, naturally, did not reflect the averages on my meter. My parents were surprised — let me rephrase that — surprised and livid, and I was, too. I had allowed myself to turn a blind eye to the real numbers.

Looking back, manipulating those numbers did nothing to help me. The averages I saw did not erase my high blood sugars nor undo the damage to my body. The only thing I accomplished was becoming oblivious to the actual trends in my sugar levels, ultimately hindering any progress in managing my diabetes.

Our genetic selection tools are based around breed averages. Therefore, having the most accurate average is essential in producing above-average genetics. It is critical the data used to compute those averages represent “average” to the best of their ability. As we look to continue our forward momentum, I encourage you all to remain diligent in your efforts in making our data the most accurate in the world.

In this issue

This issue is filled with highlights of the 2018 Annual Meeting and Conference. See Page 36 for a full recap of the event as well as Hereford activities at the American Royal.

Members stepped up in a big way in 2018 to support youth initiatives. Read about the Cottonwood Springs Educational Endowment courtesy of Nancy and Tim Keilty, Cedar, Mich., on Page 32. Finally, make plans to attend the can't-miss Mile High Night Sale at the National Western Stock Show. See Page 78 for a Denver preview and the Mile High Night Sale. I wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy new year. May your holidays be bright and your smile brighter. **HW**