



Useful Ultrasound Data...

The Key in Evaluating Carcass Genetics

by Larry Keenan, RAAA Research/Special Projects Coordinator

The past decade has seen a major shift in producers' selection pressure towards enhanced carcass characteristics.

The "carrot" leading this pack has been the premiums paid on fed cattle of sufficient quality to supply the growing demand for higher quality branded beef products. Even when ranchers are not retaining ownership, feeders are paying higher prices for calves that project such value added endpoints, and that has fueled greater selection for carcass traits at both the cow calf level and in commercial bull production. The high heritability of carcass traits allow for rapid genetic improvement through proper selection for Carcass

EPDs. In order to provide commercial bull customers with the best genetic predictions for carcass traits, seedstock producers must evaluate the carcass genetics of their herd. Other than harvesting your animals to collect actual carcass data, the best way to achieve this duty is through ultrasound.

Collecting Useful Data

Similar to weaning and yearling data collection, a little planning ahead of time can make a huge difference in the usefulness of the submitted ultrasound data. Due to the fact that an animal's physiology changes with age, we adjust the observations to a

specific age in order to achieve precise comparisons across the entire contemporary group. To correctly perform these adjustments, the ultrasound data must be taken during appropriate age ranges: bulls - 320 to 440 and heifers - 320 to 460 days of age. In the case of ultrasound observations taken on animals outside these age dates, the animals will be placed in a single head contemporary group. Therefore, you will not receive adjusted ultrasound measurements, ratios, and the data will not be used in EPD calculations. Note: Interim EPDs will be calculated for animals that have at least one parent with numeric Carcass EPD Accuracies. All animals that have

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useable ultrasound data submitted on themselves, or their offspring, will possess Carcass EPDs and Accuracies after the next National Cattle Evaluation.

Contemporary Group

Analogous to other EPDs, the backbone of Carcass EPDs is accurate ultrasound contemporary grouping. The first criterion for ultrasound contemporary group (CG) is previous CG on file at RAAA (see Nov. 2007 ARA, page 16). Typically, yearling information is submitted along with ultrasound data; therefore, yearling CG is used. However, in the abnormal case that yearling CG is not available, weaning CG information is used. Thus, animals that are in separate CG prior to ultrasound will be in separate CG for ultrasound. Animals are further separated into different contemporary groups by the information submitted on the "Ultrasound Barnsheet". In the case that animals are managed differently, simply identify different management groups through completion of Group Code, i.e. Management Code. Note: Ultrasound scan weight is not automatically entered into the RAAA database as yearling weight; therefore, if the scan weight is to be the yearling weight then submit the yearling weight information separately to the registration department.

Steps for Ultrasound Data Collection

- Register animals. Animals must be registered prior to ultrasounding.
- Ultrasound Barnsheets. These can be obtained on the RAAA website through REDS or, contact the RAAA National Office. The barnsheets will only include animals of the appropriate age.
- Contact an Ultrasound Guidelines Council (UGC) certified technician. A list of qualified technicians can be found on the RAAA website or on pages 84 and 86.
- Instruct technician to send ultrasound data to UGC certified lab. Additionally, if you need the data sent to your sale manager, other owners, etc., make arrangements with the technician.
- Once the lab processes the ultrasound data, they will send the information to RAAA. Note: there is no need for requesting rushes through the Association. Data that is received at RAAA by 3:00 p.m. CT will be processed on the same day.

If you have any questions feel free to contact a member of the RAAA Registration Department.

2008 APTC Ultrasound Field Technician List

David Aborn, Ava, MO, (417) 683-1375
Linda Aguilar, Stantonsburg, NC, (252) 238-6515
Shana Amundson, Medicine Hat, AB, (403) 526-1787
Jason Anderson, Jermone, ID, (208) 420-7352
Troy Anderson, Guide Rock, NE, (402) 257-2355
Fabiano Araujo, Uberaba, Minas Gerais, 55 34 3325 4557
Jeremy Arthur, Big Timber, MT
Paige Ayers, Oakley, KS, (785) 751-4222
Karen Bannow, Southey, Saskatchewan
Shari Beamish, Hamiota, Manitoba, (204) 764-2015
Matt Bell, Starkville, MS, (662) 323-9559
Wendy Bengochea, Carrington, ND, (701) 866-2271
Amy Betka, Kannapolis, NC, (704) 933-1414
Heather Birdsall, Cortland, NY, (607) 749-5106
Shelly Blocker, Golden, NM, (505) 286-7524
Cody Bode, Elgin, NE, (402) 843-8890
Daren Bosarge, Evergreen, AL, (251) 578-1538
Scott Bothwell, Guelph, Ontario, (519) 767-2665
Bonnie Bradford, St. Marys, OH, (419) 394-5076
Trish Breuel, Wellsville, KS, (785) 883-4128
John Brown, Meriden, WY, (307) 351-6453
Wesley Brown, Meriden, WY, (307) 246-3455
Kama Bruns, Plankinton, SD, (605) 942-7843
Alejandro Cantarelli, Lititz, PA
Stan Carnes, Stanford, KY, (606) 365-4996
Patricia Cawthorn, Bradyville, TN, (615) 765-5503
Annie Clement, College Station, TX, (325) 660-4730
Dana Cook, Cody, NE, (605) 685-1085
Sarah Cook, Cody, NE, (605) 685-4761
Russell Coon, Bethel, MO, (660) 284-6518
Lindsey Coons, Fresno, CA
Clinton Cotton, DVM, Hotchkiss, CO
Tracy Curtain, Shilo, Manitoba
Carl Dahlen, Fisher, MN
Jean-Paul Daigle, Quebec, (418) 650-2440 ext. 115
Jennifer Deobald, Hodgeville, SK, Canada (306) 677-2862
Raymond Deshaies, Becancour, Quebec, (819) 383-8705
Dustin Dorrell, Martinsville, IN, (317) 341-1633
Bridget Driscoll, Williamsburg, IA, (319) 668-2082
Alfred Echols, Cooper, TX, (903) 395-2093
Jason Edmondson, Auburn, AL, (334) 447-0509
Alice Eshelman, Centerville, WA, (509) 773-3363
Matt Fagan, Adair, IA
Ben Fox, Dauphin, Manitoba, (204) 638-4181
Eric Geving, Meeteetse, WY, (307) 868-2487
Justin Gleghorn, Clayton, NM, (505) 374-2566
Mar Goes, Beatrice, NE, (402) 239-3038
Chad Gordon, Fletcher, OK, (580) 515-0650
Megan Gotschall, Lodgepole, NE, (402) 340-0162
Trent Graves, Prairieville, LA, (225) 677-8591
Sonya Gregory, Lewistown, MT, (406) 538-8824
Jolene Grunhaupt, Crookston, NE, (402) 425-3285
Tracy Hamilton, Harrodsburg, KY
Steve Harrison, Paris, ID, (208) 427-6217
Becky Hays, Diagonal, IA, (641) 464-2310
Craig Hays, Diagonal, IA, (641) 340-4335
Randy Heiser, Ruso, ND, (701) 626-2030
Mark Henry, Ames, IA, (515) 232-9442
Bill Hilleman, Richland Center, WI, (608) 647-6229
Bill Hines, Martin, SD, (605) 685-2074

2008 APTC Ultrasound Field Technician List

Dan Hines, Martin, SD, (605) 685-8222
Elgin Hines, Martin, SD, (605) 685-8222
Amanda Houser, Cookeville, Tennessee, (931) 267-1802
J.J. Hovde, Sidney, MT, (406) 482-7810
Les Hutchens, Stillwater, OK, (405) 880-5049
Erik James, Diagonal, Iowa, (641) 464-2310
Tracy Jennings, Fayetteville, AR
Kevin Johansen, Everton, MO, (573) 289-1061
Justin Jones, Telephone, TX, (903) 664-4875
Matt Jones, Franklin, TX, (800) 251-0305
Kyle Jurney, Franklin, TX
Kristi Kern, Salina, KS, (785) 825-7600
Rethel King, Harrison, AR, (870) 743-3440
Wesley Klipfel, Jackson, TN, (731) 664-7400
Roxanne Knock, Ames, IA, (605) 695-4687
Maureen Kokoski, Bonnyville, Alberta, (780) 581-8559
Kathy Lacy, Ft. Payne, AL
Shelie Laffin, Olsburg, KS
Juan Lagioia, Escobar, Buenos Aires/1625
Matthew Lane, Billings, MT, (406) 967-2418
Bonnie Larson, Diagonal, IA, (641) 464-0771
Danny Larson, Fargo, ND, (701) 231-9478
Will Larson, Diagonal, IA, (641) 464-0771
Michael Lindell, Jacksonville, IL, (217) 243-3449
Travis Maddock, Rapid City, SD, (605) 545-0100
Jodi Martin, Gladstone, N D, (701) 483-5443
Bill Martin, Jr., Jefferson, GA, (706) 367-8349
Buck Massey, Bulverde, TX
Samuel Massey, Bulverde, TX
Susan McCalib, Hillsboro, OR
Dallas McDermott, Harlan, IA, (712) 755-2190
Doug McKinney, Carthage, TX, (903) 694-2065
Jason McLennan, Fargo, ND, (218) 790-2860
Lori McMahon, Neponset, IL (309) 852-0363
Philippe McSween, Quebec, (418) 650-2440 ext. 127
Andy Meadows, DVM, Buchanan, VA, (540) 254-2710
Mark Merrill, Ellensburg, WA, (509) 968-3132
William Morris, Buchanan, VA, (540) 529-2177
Bart Mostaert, Bridgewater, IA, (641) 745-6461
Gary Mugge, Beaman, IA, (641) 366-2663
Toby Muller, Adair, IA, (515) 971-6913
Ron Murray, Regina, Saskatchewan
Martin, Mussard, Powell, OH, (614) 327-7182
Cindy Nagel, Springfield, SD, (605) 369-2628
Scott Nash, Pocatello, ID, (208) 237-9296
Shawn Nicholson, DVM, Stuart, IA, (515) 789-9605
Susan Olson, Esmond, ND, (701) 341-2003
John Openshaw, Modesto, CA, (209) 522-7742
Barbara Otto, Spencer, NE, (402) 336-1505
Robert Owens, O'Neill, NE, (402) 336-3883
Joel Packham, Paris, ID, (208) 945-2814
Steve Paisley, Lingle, WY, (307) 760-1561
Dan Palmer, Fairfax, MN, (320) 212-4466
Rauhn Panting, Paris, ID, (208) 766-4844
Shelby Parker, Grandview, TX, (817) 866-4250
Bob Patacini, Prosser, WA, (509) 786-3002
Lorna Pelton, College Station, TX, (979) 255-1544
Tommy Perkins, Willard, MO, (417) 751-3860
Michelle Perry, Pauls Valley, OK, (405) 251-0070
Amy Perryman, Mi canopy, FL, (904) 298-5229

2008 APTC Ultrasound Field Technician List

Marty Ponder, Bristow, OK, (918) 367-3087
Amy Prater, Marlow, OK, (405) 612-3656
Jim Pritchard, Marlinton, WV, (304) 799-4310
Malcom Rainey, Moultrie, GA, (229) 769-5170
Doug Ralph, Raymond, Alberta
Travis Reid, Dallastown, PA, (717) 324-1456
Rodger Reitman, Marlow, OK
Flavio Ribeiro, Texas
Tandi Riley, Clyde, TX, (325) 529-3473
Paul Ritter, DVM, Oakley, KS, (785) 672-3411
Donnie Robertson, Normangee, TX, (936) 396-6139
Clayton Robison, West Plains, MO, (917) 766-3376
Sabrina Roden, Grandview, TX, (817) 866-2763
William Rotenberger, Ludlow, SD, (605) 576-3208
Loren Rozell, Warner, SD, (605) 226-0515
Keith Rudeen, Elm Creek, NE, (308) 856-4134
Alvin Ruiz, Yoder, WY, (307) 532-3889
Brett Ruiz, Yoder, WY, (307) 532-3889
Pat Ruland, Harlowton, MT
Joyce Rupp, Pueblo, CO
Brent Scarlett, Ashboro, NC, (336) 460-0380
Isaiah Schnurman, Prole, IA
Jamie Schulze, Carbondale, IL, (618) 559-8300
Brett Setter, Jackson, CA, (209) 223-0679
Jessica Shelton, Richland, MO, (573) 765-4893
Tommy Shields, Lake Charles, LA, (337) 377-3842
Clint Shults, Meeker, CO, (970) 878-5713
Todd Small, Welch, OK, (918) 788-3408
Mike Stanek, Potosi, WI, (608) 763-2613

Bob Stevenson, Hobson, MT, (406) 423-5365
Justin Stockall, Hershey, NE
Brian Stoller, Melba, ID
Todd Tagtmeyer, Seibert, CO, (970) 664-2334
J.R. Tait, Ames, IA, (515) 296-1429
Elliot Thomas, Menno, S D
Mike Thompson, Holly Springs, MS, (662) 252-7145
Ricardo Truffer, Rosario
Andrew VanAernam, Maryville, MO, (660) 582-9153
Rhonda Vann, Raymond, MS, (601) 857-6020
Guillermo Veneranda, Rosario, 543476460014
Don Vick, Sr., Coyle, OK, (405) 466-3932
Angela Walbridge, Pine City, MN, (320) 420-6203
Patrick Wall, Ogden, IA, (515) 232-9442
Marcy Ward, Colby, KS, (785) 462-5060
Ryan Washburn, Crystal Lake, IL, (618) 319-0358
Lacy Weimer, New Alexandria, PA, (724) 668-7062
Lynn Weimer, New Alexandria, PA, (724) 668-7062
Kenny Wells, East Lansing, MI, (614) 738-0138
Chase Wendorff, Welling, Alberta, (403) 752-4794
Rod Wendorff, Raymond, Alberta, (403) 330-3000
Clint Werner, Diagonal, IA, (641) 464-2310
Joe Werner, Diagonal, IA, (641) 464-2310
Roger West, Gainesville, FL
Erin Williams, Fort Worth, TX, (254) 592-6659
Kent Wolkenhauer, Fessenden, ND
Ray Wooters, Aurora, CO, (303) 366-7320
Casey Worrell, Harper, TX, (830) 864-5162
Mark Zink, Wayne, NE, (402) 375-2933