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Board Commentary

by John Eklund, 1st Vice President/Director Region B

How 'Bout Them Cowgirls (Or Girl Cows)

As I sit at my computer to write this commentary, the heat from the computer and desk lamp feels pretty good. We have had our second, six inch snowfall within a week and as many of you know, we do not do a good job of snow in Texas! What once was beautiful is now the root-cause of a mud slurry in every pasture where at least one cow stands!

However, as I checked for calves this afternoon I was pleasantly reminded of the amazing strengths and benefits of the Red Angus females that were "standing in the mud".

While it is so easy to get excited about the next great bull to hit the scene, I have to admit that seeing the cow herd stand over their calves while the coyotes moved through the pasture reconfirmed for me that the overall success of our breed in the past and looking forward will likely rest on the backs of our Red Angus females.

The maternal traits of Red Angus are a huge asset to cow-calf producers. The commercial cattleman and seedstock producer both depend on the cow HERD to get the job done. The differentiation is that the whole herd (not just a few sires) has to deal with all the challenges of beef production. From fertility, calving ease, fleshing ability, milk, all the way through growth performance and carcass merit, we ask these females to carry

much of the load.

For most of these traits, we have math and science to assist us in measuring and predicting the performance of our cattle. MARC even publishes "adjustment tables" to compare numbers across breeds of cattle. (Please don't get me started). Multi-breed EPD's will be here soon! Rather than running through the pertinent list of

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EPD's and getting balled-up in the numbers, I thought I would just share a few observations and numbers that I share with my coffee shop friends. As for calving ease -- Remember that CED is the "present" and CEM is the "box", or know that we have pulled three calves in seven years,

and two of those had a leg back. My buddies just don't understand.

As for fertility, our challenge is to be sure heifers are not bred PRIOR to weaning. Even though we wean in August, some of the older heifers (8 months) will already be cycling.

Then I tell the coyote part followed by the old JR daughter that stands by her newborn calf such that the calf is shaded on a hot summer day. (We had our first fall calves last year, but remember that fall in Texas is just more hot summer.)

I could go on, but if you own Red Angus females, your stories and observations in your herd are probably better and certainly "sound" better with coffee, steak, and eggs! ■