

Heifer Pregnancy EPD....

Soon to have a Larger Impact on your Bottom Line!

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If you have heard it once, you have heard it one hundred times: Reproduction is the most economically important trait in the beef industry. Some purebred producers may argue that this is not a correct statement concerning their operation. However, those same purebred producers would agree that reproduction is extremely important to their number one bull buying customer base: commercial producers.

To the commercial producer reproduction is the 'King' when compared to other traits of economic significance. No other trait comes close, not even growth or carcass traits. For these reasons, the Red Angus Association (RAAA) made it their quest to be the beef industry leader in accurately describing reproduction through the implementation of Economically Relevant Traits (ERTs). This article will focus on Heifer Pregnancy, which is defined as the probability that an animal's daughters will conceive to calve as two year olds.

Prior to the development of the Heifer Pregnancy EPD, cattle producers were forced to evaluate scrotal circumference in an effort to guess the reproductive success of the bull's daughters. Research has shown that increased scrotal circumference typically results in daughters that reach puberty at an earlier age. But, scrotal circumference has no impact on daughters becoming and sustaining pregnancy. So, you must ask yourself: Should I select for bulls that would produce daughters that reach puberty earlier, or should I select for bulls that would produce daughters that become pregnant and stay pregnant? If you choose the latter the Heifer Pregnancy EPD is a great tool to help you attain that goal.

One of the great benefits of the Heifer Pregnancy EPD is the data required to be submitted is very simple. You are not required to submit palpation or ultrasound results. Through Total Herd Reporting we are able to determine if the heifer conceived a calf. The only information needed is the time interval when the heifer was given the opportunity to become pregnant. Thus, when the bulls were turned in and pulled off, or when artificial insemination was performed and clean-up bulls were pulled off.

Currently, in order for an animal (bull or cow) to have a Heifer Pregnancy EPD, Heifer Exposure Forms must have been submitted on that animal's daughters. Therefore, younger animals would not have the data required to possess a Heifer Pregnancy EPD. However, research focused on calculating Heifer Pregnancy EPDs on animals not old enough to have daughters is near completion. At that time young animals will receive interims based on Heifer Pregnancy EPDs of the young animal's sire and dam. Animals whose sire or dam does not have a Heifer Pregnancy EPD will not receive an interim Heifer Pregnancy EPD. With that being said, it is very important for you to complete and submit the Heifer Exposure Form in order to attain Heifer Exposure EPDs for your mature cows and bulls that you have retained heifers from.

Currently, no young Red Angus bulls have a Heifer Pregnancy EPD. Therefore, commercial producers are unable to include the Heifer Pregnancy EPD in their bull buying decisions. In the near future, young bulls will have the opportunity to possess interim Heifer Pregnancy EPDs. Knowing the economic importance of reproduction to the commercial producer, I am confident in stating that commercial producers will place great emphasis on the Heifer Pregnancy EPD in their bull buying decisions. The economic significance of reproduction just increased for the purebred producer.

Heifer Pregnancy EPD Example:

Bull A has a Heifer Pregnancy EPD of 20.

Bull B has a Heifer Pregnancy EPD of 5.

We would expect Bull A's daughters to have a 15% higher probability of becoming pregnant and calving as two-year-olds as compared to Bull B's daughters.

Beginning with the 2005 calf crop, calves born to 2 year old females will be contemporary grouped and ratioed separately from calves born to females older than 2 years of age.