

HOW TO EVALUATE GARDINER BULLS

The common question from bull buyers is:

“How do I choose the best bull?”

The answer always begins by addressing two factors:

#1 • What are YOUR production goals and...

#2 • What are YOUR feed resources & marketing plan.

We have a wide range of customers with very different operations and marketing plans. Therefore, the best bull for one customer may not be the best choice for another.

When we design matings to produce our sale bulls we consider a few “key” EPDs. Let’s consider five of the most common EPDs and indexes that guide us before we apply these and other factors to evaluate a couple of sale bull prospects.

CE

We encourage our customers to concentrate on the Calving Ease Direct (CED) EPD when searching for a calving-ease sire. The CED value is a direct measurement of calving ease among first-calf heifers. Traits such as actual birth weight or birth weight EPD are indirect indicators of calving ease and are not as accurate a selection tool for predicting calving ease as the CED EPD.

YW

The Yearling Weight (YW) EPD is the best genetic estimate of “pure growth.” The heritability of YW, .42, is the highest for any growth trait. Furthermore, the genetic correlation between YW and weaning weight (WW), .87, is extremely high. That tells you that selecting for greater YW will result in a similar response for WW. Because of its power as a “growth indicator,” YW EPD is a major component in the calculation of \$Feedlot (\$F) and \$Beef (\$B), both of which are markedly increased by a high rate of post-weaning weight gain.

YH

Unfortunately, increasing growth through selection for YW can be accompanied by undesirable increases in birth weight (BW), mature height (MH) and mature weight (MW) in a cow herd. Our strategy to reduce the unwanted effects that can accompany selecting for increased YW has been to include selection for moderate stature coincident with the selection for rapid early growth. Specifically, we select against the tendency to increase yearling hip height (YH) as we select for more growth.



MARB

If you are one of the many GAR customers that retains ownership and sells cattle on a quality-based grid or sells your cattle to feeders who do, you should continue to select for marbling. “Marbling matters” because the greatest profit comes from reaching the upper two-thirds of the Choice grade or Prime. Added value of a carcass sold on a quality-based grid is due to marbling.

\$B

Beef Value (\$B), is a post weaning index predicting profitability based on postweaning gain and carcass traits. Traits included in the index are: YW, DMI, MARB, CW, RE and Fat. Hence, we see \$B as an important index for our customers that retain ownership through the feedlot phase and market animals on a quality-based grid.

ROI

Since 2014 we have used Method Genetics (MG) evaluations. The MG evaluation does not use EPDs from the American Angus database. Instead, all the genetic predictions performed by MG are based on a unique population of cattle, which includes GAR genetics and GAR customer herds. This evaluation provides the most reliable production indexes for our customer base.

The Retained Ownership Index (ROI) is the best tool we can offer our customers for evaluating bulls and females. Unlike other indexes, ROI combines maternal, growth and carcass quality endpoints into one comprehensive index. This makes it the most useful index for selecting bulls to sire replacement females or offspring headed to the feedlot and processing plant.