

County Agent News
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Buying Bulls by the Numbers

The workshops will focus on how beef producers can use estimated progeny differences and DNA in bull selection.

Beef producers will have an opportunity to participate in bull-buying workshops at three locations in North Dakota during January.

Leading the workshops will be Kris Ringwall, North Dakota State University Extension Service beef cattle specialist and Dickinson Research Extension Center director.

The “Buying Bulls by the Numbers” workshops will focus on how beef producers can use estimated progeny differences (EPDs) and DNA in bull selection.

“Ultimately, producers have many tools available to guide them when they are buying bulls for their herd,” Ringwall says.

The dates and locations for the “Buying Bulls by the Numbers” workshops are:

- Jan. 22 - Central Grasslands Research Extension Center near Streeter, 1-3 p.m.
- Jan. 27 - Carrington Research Extension Center, 1-3 p.m.
- Jan. 29 - North Central Research Extension Center near Minot, 1-3 p.m.

Producers will have a hands-on opportunity to learn how to search breed databases to evaluate possible bull purchases for EPDs.

“We want to give beef producers a close view of how EPDs can be a positive tool to improve herd performance and profitability,” Ringwall says. Workshop participants are asked to bring current sire registration numbers and sale catalogs from places where they purchased bulls.

“The workshop will provide insights into how producers can effectively use the numbers by actually reviewing information from the catalogs,” Ringwall says. “When producers register, they will need to provide bull registration numbers on previously purchased bulls. The review will be made one-on-one with producers to show them how the EPDs have or will impact their production model.”

Participants can learn how EPDs relate to direct traits such as weight or size. Presenters will discuss how indirect traits, such as milk production, are included in EPDs and offer further refinement to the selection of breeding stock.

“Another desired outcome of the workshops is to give producers insight into how they can utilize genomics in their beef herds,” Ringwall says. “The genetics of the beef herd in North Dakota is wide and varied. One example is birth weight. It is one of the major issues within the beef industry. Should the beef industry be able to regulate prebirth growth? Small or average calves at birth are possible, as is increased capacity to grow post-birth.”

Biological processes can and will respond to natural and man-made selection techniques. Using tools such as EPDs and DNA analysis, producers can select, purchase and use bulls that can provide profitability for their operation.

Workshop space is limited, so preregistration is required. To reserve a spot, producers should contact Lee Tisor at lee.tisor@ndsu.edu or (701) 456-1105.