

# Livestock Notes

## Does A Maternal Milk EPD Really Mean More Milk Production?

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Beef producers are often confused about the use of the maternal milk EPD in beef selection. After all, how can something reported in pounds of weaning weight actually mean more milk production?

A couple of recent research reports have confirmed that selection for higher maternal milk EPD does indeed result in higher milk production as well as higher weaning weights. A South Dakota State University study compared daughters of high and low EPD sires for maternal milk. They found the higher EPD sires produced daughters that had more daily milk production and calves with heavier weaning weights.

A second study at Virginia Tech University compared heifers and cows from sires that were selected as: high milk + high yearling wt., low milk + high yearling wt., high milk + low yearling wt. and low milk + low yearling wt. They also found that selection for higher milk EPDs results in higher actual milk production and heavier weaning weights in daughters of these sires. In fact, the latter study found that a 1 percent increase in milk production accounted for about 2 pounds of

weaning weight EPD from the maternal milk value.

But using data like this in a selection program for increasing milk production in the herd is not without its pitfalls. One problem, in our environment anyway, may be too much milk. There is a decreasing return to calf growth with increased milk production. That is, the growth response to increased milk production levels off once a sufficient amount of milk is available.

Secondly, there must be some genetic potential for growth in order for the calf to use the increased milk.

Finally, it takes feed to produce milk and we must be aware that heavier milking cow have increased nutritional requirements, particularly for protein. However, the South Dakota study showed that production efficiency, measured as the ratio of feed energy to pounds of weaned calf, was greater for cows with heavier milk production.

Information is available to increase milk production in any beef herd and it will increase the efficiency of production as well. But before making any selections, consider the additional costs of production and other genetic values.

## Take Care In Handling Your Livestock

More than 50 percent of all bruises in slaughter livestock are caused by rough careless handling. The most common cause of bruising sheep/lambs is grabbing the lamb by the wool or by the hind leg—more than 25 percent of lamb bruises occur on the hind leg while 17 percent occur in the loin area. A bruise results from a blood vessel hemorrhaging under the skin/hide. The outside of the animal can appear normal even when there is a large injury under the hide. Unless you sell on a carcass basis, you may never know if you are selling livestock with bruises.

Bruised meat is not supposed to be used for human consumption. According to a recent report, \$46 million annually is lost from bruises on cattle and hogs.

Some hints to aid in handling livestock:

- Try to exercise patience in loading or when working with livestock. Let them move at their own pace.

- Especially refrain from grabbing sheep by their wool. Catch them by the rear flank or under the chin.

- Try to eliminate hazards that cause bruises or injury to your livestock. This includes protruding objects, gates that animals may get wedged between, etc.

### Revisions Proposed For Grading Lambs

American Sheep Industry (ASI) has proposed revisions in the yield grade standards for ovine carcasses. ASI requested this yield and quality grade system to give the lamb industry a value-based marketing tool that provides an incentive to produce lean consumer preferred lambs. They believe that current marketing structure encourages fat rather than lean.

Proposed revisions to the grading standards are:

- Require that ovine carcasses be identified for quality and yield grade when officially graded
- Require that most of the kidney and pelvic fat be removed

prior to grading — cannot be over 1 percent of carcass weight

- Shift and narrow the fat thickness range in each yield grade

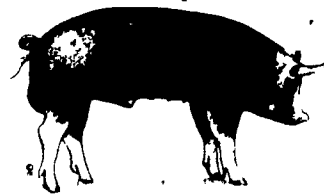
- Eliminate consideration of leg conformation score in determining the yield grade.

The proposed standards incorporate one component of the USDA yield grade standards of 1982, utilizing fat thickness over the loin eye at the 12/13 rib.

Yield grade is basically determined by fat thickness as follows:

Yield Grade 1 = up to 0.15 inches; Yield Grade 2 = 0.16 to 0.25 inches; Yield Grade 3 = 0.26 to 0.35 inches; Yield Grade 4 = 0.36 to 0.45 inches; Yield Grade 5 = > 0.46 inches.

This is some of the basic information included in the ASI proposal.



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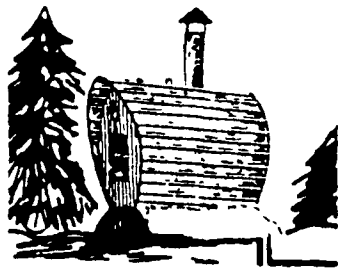
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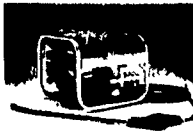
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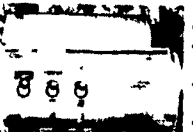
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