

"Basically" Farming



Helpful hints for new and existing farmers

PENNSSTATE



College of Agricultural Sciences
Cooperative Extension - Southeast Region

UNDERSTANDING EXPECTED PROGENY DIFFERENCES IN BEEF CATTLE FOR THE FIRST-TIME BUYER

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Fall brings with it cooler weather and the opportunity to attend various cattle sales throughout the country. Many producers are offering bred heifers, weaned heifer calves, and bred cows, often with the most current genetics the breed has to offer.

As a first time buyer, you need to be aware of the information that is offered on the sale cattle and have a basic understanding of what that information means to your operation.

The majority of breed associations have calculated EPDs (Expected Progeny Difference) values on animals within that breed. These numbers are obtained from a huge data base of weights and measurements obtained from breeders who submit this data on a yearly basis on their herd.

Weights submitted include birth weights, weaning weights,

yearling weights, and more recently ultrasound data that enables the determination of the type of carcass that animal will produce without slaughtering it. All of these measurements are submitted into this data base and the EPDs are then determined for a particular animal. If the animal is from a herd that submits this data, the EPDs for that animal will appear on its pedigree.

As a buyer these are an invaluable tool to use when purchasing an animal. It gives you the history of what its past ancestors have done and what the animal you are about to purchase can potentially do for you if the animal is handled correctly.

The Angus breed has the largest data base of all breeds. Other breeds have data bases, too. It is difficult to compare EPDs between breeds since they are calculated and reported differently. If you want information on a particular breed, call the National Breed Association to obtain information on EPDs for that particular breed.

In a nutshell, as a first-time buyer you want to select breeding stock with balanced traits across

the board. You want low to moderate birth weights to avoid calving difficulties and strong maternal characteristics such as milk EPDs that show that the ancestry of that animal has milked well and will raise a heavy calf. Weaning and yearling EPDs should also be high. This shows the animal's ability to grow on mother's milk and then on feed once it is weaned and on its own.

Marbling is a sought-after trait now in carcasses so look for cattle with positive marbling traits. If you are handed a pedigree without EPDs, there is a pretty good chance that the owner has not submitted data on that particular animal.

EPDs are only a tool and you need to also look at the personal record of the animal you are about to purchase. What was its actual birth weight, weaning weight, and yearling weight? What were its ratios? Is it sound on its feet and legs? What is the disposition like and how is this herd handled? Are you looking for cattle that will make it on grass or cattle that will be fed grain throughout most of their life?

Last but not least, does the person you are purchasing cattle from have a good reputation and are they honest about their numbers and methods of handling?

Combine all of these information pieces and you will have a better chance of selecting cattle that will fit the needs on your farm. Remember that information is only as good as the person who submits it. If you have any questions, ask your breed association representative or state or county extension beef specialist for help in understanding the information available to you.

Cattlemen's Association Announces Show, Sale

MEADOWLANDS (Washington Co.) — The Washington County Cattlemen's Association has set Saturday, Sept. 27, as the date for its third annual club calf show and sale here at the Washington County Fairgrounds.

The sale will feature 30-40 lots of show quality, halter-broken heifers and steers. The lots will be shown and judged beginning at 4 p.m. and sold according to show placement at 6 p.m.

Lunch and refreshments will be available throughout the day. A Silent Auction will also be held with proceeds going directly to the Washington County Cattlemen's Association Educational Support Grant.

Applications for consignments to the sale are available to anyone in the tri-state area and can be obtained by contacting Brian Hrutkay at (724) 239-3556 or Mike Rohaley at (724) 229-4856.

Lebanon County Holstein Sale Posts Results

LEBANON (Lebanon Co.) — The Lebanon County Holstein Club hosted its 24th annual sale at the Lebanon Fairgrounds, Aug. 22.

Bidding was brisk on fine consignments throughout the sale. The sale was topped by a daughter of Regancrest Magnificent, consigned by Glen Brubaker and purchased for \$3,150 by Darryl Brubaker of Womelsdorf.

Second high seller was a Storm daughter consigned by Stonehurst Farms of Strasburg and purchased for \$2,350 by Justin Hillegas of Berlin.

Next was a Silky Cousteau

daughter from Stonehurst, purchased for \$2,250 by Mervin Brubaker of Womelsdorf.

Two Comestar Leader daughters consigned by Adam and Lisa Sonnen of Richland were purchased by Michael Bohonik of West Middlesex for \$2,250 and \$2,200, respectively.

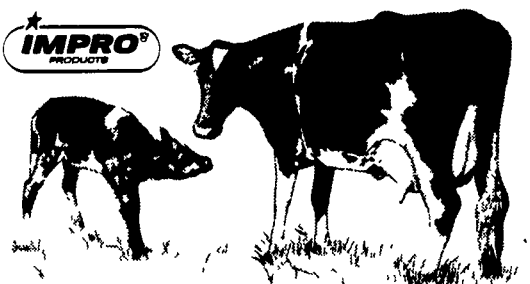
Rounding out the top six was a Jolt daughter from Mike Kunkle of Jonestown, purchased by Justin Hillegas for \$2,150.

Fresh cows and heifers averaged \$1,910 and bred heifers averaged \$1,830. Adam Sonnen and Andy Ebersole co-chaired this year's sale.

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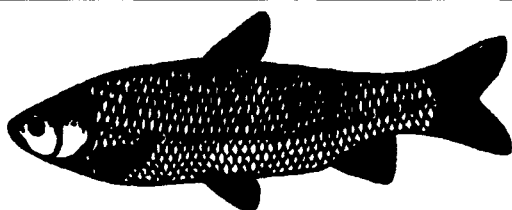
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Scheduled: features on organic dairy farms and strategies for success in organic milk production from university. In addition, news and information from the breed associations and cooperatives.

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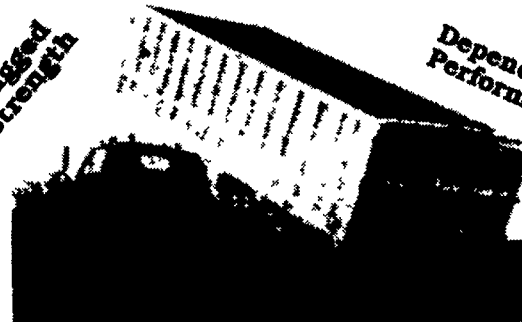
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