

New Multi-Breed Evaluation Debuts

The American Gelbvieh Association (AGA) has made significant genetic evaluation advancements during the past year. Thanks to the efforts of the University of Georgia, the AGA has the most advanced genetic evaluation system in the nation beginning with the January, 2003 analysis. This new analysis dubbed the multi-breed evaluation (MBE) successfully takes into account hybrid vigor and the genetic contributions of all breeds represented in the pedigree when calculating EPDs. This is a monumental advancement for the calculation of both hybrid animals and purebred animals raised in the same contemporary group as hybrid animals.

Improved Across Breed conversions

The new MBE methodology allowed AGA to compare EPD differences among Gelbvieh animals, Angus animals and Red Angus animals within the analysis. Historically, the AGA and the beef industry was forced to rely on data from the Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) in order to convert EPDs from Gelbvieh to either Angus or Red Angus or vice versa. While the MARC data was the best information available at the time, the data was developed using very small sample sizes at a single location.

The AGA across breed conversions were developed using literally thousands of high accuracy Angus and Red Angus sires compared against tens of thousands of Gelbvieh sires in hundreds of contemporary groups across the entire United States. We recommend that you use the following across breed conversion table when converting Gelbvieh EPDs to Angus or Red Angus equivalents:

Across Breed Conversion Tables

Add to convert to an Angus EPD base

December, 2002	Across Breed Conversion to Angus Base			
Breed	BW	WW	YW	Milk
Gelbvieh	4.6	6.8	-2.7	4.7
Angus	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Red Angus	1.8	0.9	2.4	-1.1

Add to convert to Gelbvieh EPD base

December, 2002	Across Breed Conversion to Gelbvieh Base			
Breed	BW	WW	YW	Milk
Gelbvieh	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Angus	-4.6	-6.8	2.7	-4.7
Red Angus	-2.8	-5.9	5.1	-5.8

New Selection Indices Available

The AGA is taking the lead in providing the commercial industry with common sense but powerful selection tools. Cattle breeds have continued to bombard cow/calf producers with EPDs that evaluate a myriad traits ranging from calving ease to yearling

performance to stayability to a whole host of carcass traits. The result is that in our effort to provide cow/calf producers with all of these EPDs, we have many times overwhelmed them with too much data.

The dairy industry in the United States has been using a simplified technology that incorporates EPDs from several traits, weights the traits based on economic value, and produces a single economic index for the group of traits. These selection indices are presented as dollar values. As an example, you can compare two dairy bulls based on the dollars of milk that bulls daughter's are expected to produce.

The AGA established a goal in our 24-month plan to produce 3 indices for each segment of the industry (cow/calf, feedlot, carcass). The AGA has released two indices over the past two years... the Grid Merit EPD and the Feedlot Merit EPD. The AGA is still in development of the Cow/calf Merit EPD.

The Grid Merit EPD

As with other EPDs, index EPDs are used to estimate how future progeny of one animal compare to progeny of another animal within the same breed. Dr. Patrick Doyle, currently with Chico State University and former AGA Director of Education, spearheaded the design and release of the Grid Merit EPD in 2002. The Grid Merit EPD measures the dollar value associated with marketing progeny on a value-based grid. Specifically, the Grid Merit EPD predicts the carcass value associated with selling carcasses on a grid based on quality grade, yield grade and fitting weight specifications. As an example, a bull with a Grid Merit EPD of \$12 is expected to sire calves that when marketed on a "typical" grid will average \$12 higher in carcass value than calves sired by a bull with an EPD of \$0. The Grid Merit EPD was refined with the release of the 2003 sire summary to remove the impact of carcass weight in the calculation. The value of gain is more accurately reflected in the new Feedlot Merit EPD.

The Feedlot Merit EPD

The Feedlot Merit EPD was recently released as part of the 2003 Gelbvieh genetic evaluation. Tom Brink, former AGA executive director, performed the research and development of this index. Like the Grid Merit EPD, the Feedlot Merit EPD is expressed in dollars. Specifically, the Feedlot Merit EPD measures the dollar value associated with the expected gain and feedlot efficiency of progeny when fed in a "typical" feedlot arrangement. As an example, a bull with Feedlot Merit EPD of \$15 is expected to sire calves that will perform \$30 per head better than calves sired by a bull with an EPD of \$-15.

The AGA continues to work towards providing the industry with the best genetic predictions in the country. The new MBE analysis offered by the AGA is the new standard of excellence for beef industry genetic evaluations.