

## **\$B v. \$W**

### **Which is more important?**

(In terms you can understand—by Landi)

All the rage is about \$B these days. . . but is \$B what your herd *really* needs? IT DEPENDS! Are you feeding out your calves or retaining ownership? Are you selling your calves at weaning? Are you retaining replacement daughters? These questions are *critical* to knowing if \$B or \$W is most important in your next herd sire purchase.

Both \$Beef Value (\$B) and \$Weaned Calf Value (\$W) are multi-trait indexes. In other words, they combine many economically important traits into one value designed to simplify the selection process for commercial cattle producers. Does this mean you can look only at \$B or \$W? NO! Knowing the strengths and weakness of your herd and selecting bulls with traits that compliment your cows is still very important.

*If you sell your calves after weaning or backgrounding, the most important index to consider is \$W. The higher the \$W, the more potential you have for higher economic returns when selling calves at this time. \$W is important for retaining replacement females—low birth, high growth, optimum milk, and an economical mature size are generally considered favorable. Here is a peek at some (not all) of the interactions \$W takes into account.*

- Birth weight—for example, bigger birth weights can be associated with more dystocia and death loss, therefore lower birth weights are treated more favorably.
- Weaning weight—higher weaning weights mean more pounds to sell, which is favorable. However, the higher energy requirements for heavier weaning weights are taken into account.
- Maternal milk—varying cow milk levels mean differences in weaning weights and costs related to lactation energy requirements.
- Mature cow size—to put it simply, big cows eat more feed. OK, it really is more complicated than that, but generally speaking, a smaller cow will require less inputs for maintenance, and therefore is favorable to the calculation of \$W.

*If you feed out your calves or retain ownership and see them through the finishing phase, \$B is important because \$B considers postweaning performance and carcass value. \$B is a terminal index.*

The growth factor in \$B is \$Feedlot Value (\$F). Note that \$F follows closely with growth EPDs—cattle with higher a YW EPD will also have a higher \$F value. Growth is critical to the feedlot operator's profitability.

The carcass component in \$B is the \$Grid Value (\$G). \$G considers *quality* components (Prime, Choice, Select, etc.) and *yield* components (Yield Grade 1, 2, etc.) and their associated premiums and discounts. As an example, an animal capable of producing progeny that are Prime, Yield Grade 1 should have superior \$G Values compared to an animal whose progeny are Select and Yield Grade 4. This is a drastic example used to show a point. I realize that Prime YG 1s are a rare commodity and hopefully the industry is making progress away from Select YG 4s.