

Hoofprints January 2005

Prepared by Carl Neifert

ISU Extension Livestock Field Specialist

Iowa Bull Clinics-- selection decision 2005

Check out the Iowa Beef Center web site for the location and time(Jan12-26), etc of the Bull Selection Clinic nearest you . This should be a very good program as we look at breeding goals for the next 5 years for cow-calf producers. We'll also unveil the new IBC computer bull selection assistance program to help you evaluate and use the EPD data available on your future herd bulls.

Genetic correlation of carcass and calving traits.

Swedish scientists recently reported results of genetic correlations between calving and carcass traits. Results showed that selection for higher carcass weights would lead to higher direct and maternal birth weights and increased direct calving difficulty.

Increased carcass fatness was genetically associated with lower birth weights and in most cases with less calving difficulty.

The authors concluded that it is important for both direct and maternal calving performance as well as carcass traits to be included in the breeding goals of breeders when selecting Seedstock.

(Eriksson, et.al. 2004 Anim. Sci 82:2269) taken from Article by Cattle Call, December 2004, Michigan State University, Volume 10, Issue 4.

Carl's comment: Another example for not using a "one trait selection" mentality in selecting breeding stock.

Improving Handling facilities for 2005- A New Years Resolution

How can you improve your cattle handling facilities to easier handle your animals? Here are some basic concepts to use in designing cattle handling facilities:

1. Cattle tend to move toward light. If there is light at the end of the tunnel, they will move toward it. (Avoid glaring or blinding light). Face chutes either north or south. If your chute is covered or in an enclosed area, cattle will enter easier if they can line up single file before entering the enclosed/cover area. The wall of the building should never be the junction of the crowding pen and the chute.
2. If cattle aren't moving forward, stop and consider what could be distracting them, before trying to force them. Walk through your facility at their eye level and see what makes them balk.

3. Install solid sides on working chute and alleys, crowding pens, and loading and unloading chutes. Solid sides prevent cattle from seeing distractions. It's like putting blinders on a draft horse. Solid walls can be made from wood or metal.
4. A curved chute / alley will let you take advantage of the cattle's natural tendency to circle around the handler. Single file chutes allow cattle to follow- the -leader. This keeps cattle moving if you partially empty chute then refill it. You need 20-30 feet to make this work well.
5. You can make some adjustments to your cattle handling facilities at little cost, and without buying new equipment. Use scrap material, hammers, welders, etc to modify your current facility into a more friendly cattle movement facility.
6. Less stress on animals equals easier handling, results in less stress on the handler and more dollars in your pocket in the long run.

(From article by Norman Suverly in Cattle Call, December 2004, Volume 10; issue 4)

Carl's Comment: If you need more information and suggestions on cattle handling facilities see Dr. Temple Grandin's web site grandin.com or contact your local ISU Livestock Field Specialist.