

## **Post Rock Answers**

**Week of: 2/19/18 – 2/23/18**

**Barrett Simon**

**Post Rock District – Livestock**

### **Sire Selection with the Right Goals in Mind**

The excitement of Spring often goes unrivaled for cow-calf producers when compared to the other seasons. Calving season is among us and before long fresh genetics, quality cattle, and inquisitive conversations with bull producers will consume us as well. Why is it that spring bull sales garner so much attention and buzz in areas all across the country? For some it is due to good meals and the social atmosphere; however, the biggest reason is that herd sires account for over 80 percent of the genetics in our respective cow herds. Decisions made today can and will impact the genetic potency of our herd for generations to come.

There is no question that the beef community continues to grow and develop new avenues of production for cattlemen. Selling at weaning, retaining ownership, and developing replacement heifers are just a few of the options available for any given operation. While most of us firmly believe that we have a solid business plan and know what bulls will work in our operation, I constantly remind myself to keep pace with how the genetics of any given breed are constantly improving and what genetic traits of importance I should be selecting for. In example, some of the most talked about cattle this Spring will boast exceptional marbling and ribeye EPD's, and while those numbers are undoubtedly imperative to some, for other operations who focus on developing maternal heifers, these carcass-oriented traits do not directly impact the bottom line. In a similar fashion, bulls that excel within their breed for yearling weight, may not offer the early growth desired for producers who sell immediately at weaning. It is very easy to get sucked into the traits that the auctioneer or sale rep exclaims on the mic as any given lot enters the ring, but producers who study bulls beforehand and understand which genetic traits will give them a true competitive advantage are far better off.

With that in mind, what traits do classify as terminal or maternal? Maternally driven producers should put emphasis on traits such as calving ease (to an extent), heifer pregnancy, Stayability, Total Maternal, \$Energy, or \$Cow for different breeds. Scrotal circumference is often a trait that gets overlooked when giving thought to females. However, a larger circumference does positively impact the age of first estrous in daughters and can in turn play a factor when breeding season comes around.

On the flip side, EPD's expressing yearling weight, carcass weight, yield grad and other carcass data, \$Feedlot, or the Terminal Index are all traits that benefit producers who plan to feed through, retain ownership, and potentially sell progeny on a grid based system. I strongly contend that milk is also an EPD that should be considered largely on the terminal side. For those who are unfamiliar, breed associations utilize milk numbers to express additional pounds of weaning weight gained. Due to the fact that it is expressed in pounds, and has no direct correlation of the ability to conceive, calve, or mother efficiently, this trait is of little relevance to those building efficient females and should probably not be a focal decision point for those operators.

Several seedstock producers within the Post Rock Extension District boundaries do an outstanding job of offering future herd sires with a wide variety of value and should be the buyers number one resource before buying a bull. Reach out to bull producers, explain your business model, when and how you look to make money, and the top two or three areas of importance to your business, and there is no doubt they will be able to steer you in the direction of the most suitable sire group.

As breed associations continue to improve the availability of genetic selection tools and the accuracy with which producers can use them, keeping pace with all of these tools can be a daunting task. There is no call for frustration or panic as you flip through bull sale and semen company catalogs as there are several resources available to make clear the purpose of these numbers. If any questions arise, do not hesitate to reach out to any Post Rock Extension office and visit with me about any questions you may have or about where to put your emphasis in selection.

Look for flyers and more information on K-State Research and Extension's upcoming **Spring Breeding Update: Synchronization, Sire Selection, and EPD's** program. We will play host to industry experts and K-State specialists for more in depth conversation on EPD's and other tools for genetic selection, comparing EPD's of different breeds, and how to boost efficiency of your artificial insemination program. The event will be held March 8<sup>th</sup> at the Finch Theater in Lincoln. Contact Barrett Simon at (785)378-3174 for additional information.

*Post Rock Extension District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith counties. Barrett may be contacted at Barrett8@ksu.edu or by calling Smith Center, 282-6823, Beloit 738-3597, Lincoln 524-4432, Mankato 378-3174, or Osborne 346-2521. Join us on Facebook at "Post Rock Extension" along with our blog site at [postrockextension.blogspot.com](http://postrockextension.blogspot.com). Follow us on Twitter @KSRE\_PostRock. Also remember our website is [postrock.ksu.edu](http://postrock.ksu.edu)*