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Performance Data Weaning Weights

Collecting Weaning Weights and Fall Performance Data

As the leaves begin to change and we prepare for another winter, it's the perfect time to reflect on our production strategies and consider how performance data collection can improve the profitability and sustainability of your herd. One of the most critical aspects of herd management is the collection of accurate weaning weights. The first step in good data collection is a properly identified animal with a tattoo and a Limousin CCIA tag.

Weaning weights are a foundational measurement of calf performance and are important indicators of productivity. Collecting accurate weaning weights allow members to:

Assess Genetic Potential: By analyzing weaning weights, members can identify superior genetics within their herds.

Make Informed Breeding Decisions: Performance data helps in selecting breeding animals that will improve herd performance.

Enhance Market Value: Calves with higher weaning weights typically command better prices at sale time. By focusing on data-driven improvements, members can position their operations for greater profitability.

To ensure the data collected is reliable and useful, members should consider the following best practices:

Standardized Weighing Procedures: Weigh calves at the same time of year (ideally between 205 and 230 days of age) and under similar conditions to eliminate variability. Ensure that calves are not stressed during the weighing process. The weight should never be estimated and should be recorded to the nearest whole pound if possible. If recording the weight to the nearest whole pound is not feasible, then it can be acceptable to record the weight to the nearest 2-pound increment.

Weaning weight should never be recorded to the nearest five pound or other larger increment. Weaning weight should never be estimated by averaging a group weight. Scales should be regularly calibrated.

Record Keeping in Digital Beef: Maintain detailed records of each calf's identification, birth date, dam's information, and weaning weight. Members who complete their registry work by paper will be mailed a weaning weight spreadsheet to record data. Members who work online can enter the weaning weights in Digital Beef in the weaning weight queue. Animals must be registered or recorded prior to entering weaning weights.

Adjusted Value

When publishing weaning weights or performing a genetic evaluation on weaning weight, several non-genetic factors should be considered that influence weaning weight, in addition to the contemporary group. The effects of these factors should be adjusted out prior to publishing weaning weights or computing weaning weight ratios.

Obviously weaning weights are affected by the age of the animal, so an adjustment is made for animals all weighed on the same day but differing in age. The standard age for adjustment is 205 days, so the standard then for age-adjusted weaning weight is 205-day weight. To calculate this adjusted weight, the ADG from birth to weaning is multiplied by 205, and then birth weight is added. Additionally, the age of the dam of the calf as well as the sex of the calf will influence calf weaning weights.

Weaning Weight Contemporary Groups

Weaning contemporary group is a group of calves that are of the same sex, are similar in age, and have been raised in the same management group (same location on the same feed and pasture, at the same time) and weaned and weighed on the same day. Contemporary groups should include as many cattle as can be accurately compared. However, if, for example, first-calf heifers are given preferential treatment (better feed) prior to weaning their calves, then these calves should be designated into a separate contemporary group than the calves from mature cows. The makeup and structure of a contemporary group can be viewed under the CG's tab in Digital Beef.

Beyond Weaning Weights: Additional Performance Data

While weaning weights are crucial, they are just one component of performance data collection

Members should also consider collecting data on:
Yearling Weights: Tracking the weight of calves at a yearling stage provides further insight into growth patterns and overall herd health.

Mature Cow Weight: Ideally taken at the time of calf weaning at 205 days using a scale.

Docility: Genetic evaluations for docility are conducted in a single-trait analysis using a linear model fit to chute score category values. No repeated measures are fit. If an animal has both a weaning and yearling docility score than the weaning score is used. The contemporary group is included as the group at weaning (if a weaning observation) or yearling (if a yearling observation). The EPD should be published on the docility-score scale. Only chute scores are used in genetic evaluations.

The collection of weaning weights and other performance data is not only an administrative task but a critical component of effective program management. By embracing data collection and analysis, Limousin members can enhance the performance of their herds, increase marketability, and ultimately drive profitability.
As we move into the winter months, prioritize data collection in our operations. Together, we can strengthen the Canadian Limousin breed and ensure its continued success.

For further information on best practices, please contact the Canadian Limousin Association.

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