



The Revamped Gelbvieh Carcass EPDs: What You Need to Know

The Fall 2007 release of the Canadian Gelbvieh Association's (CGA) Sire Summary contains significant updates to the carcass related EPDs. Below are some of the most frequently asked questions regarding these updated EPDs.

What is the basis of the change to the carcass EPDs?

For the first time the carcass related EPDs incorporate ultrasound data, as well as carcass data collected on a sire's progeny. These new EPDs are the result of research conducted by Dr. Mark Enns and Brian Brigham of Colorado State University over the past 18 months. Over the past several years the increased adoption of ultrasound technology by CGA members has resulted in a data set with enough records to make the incorporation of this data relevant. Another major change is that the EPDs are calculated on the basis of a constant fat end point rather than an age end point. This more closely matches the industry practice of finishing feedlot animals to an end point of approximately .4 inch of outer fat thickness.

Does the addition of Ultrasound data improve the EPDs?

Primarily from the perspective of adding data into a sire's record much sooner than could be obtained from progeny carcass records. By adding ultrasound data into the model to calculate EPDs we can add accuracy to EPDs of young sires 12 to 18 months earlier and provide a more reliable set of tools for the seed stock producer and commercial bull buyers to evaluate individuals in regard to their impact on carcass traits.

How does the Ultrasound data impact the actual EPDs?

As the use of ultrasound technology has become more widespread in the industry, the tendency has been to use the data primarily to market an individual's ultrasound performance in comparison to his or her contemporary group as a measure of the individual's contribution to carcass merit. The real value in the ultrasound data is to look at the performance of a sire's progeny across many different contemporary groups. In the case of the Carcass Weight and Rib Eye Area EPDs, both bull and heifer contemporary groups are included in the calculations. For the Marbling EPD only heifer contemporary groups are included.

Does this affect the accuracy values for these EPDs?

Yes. The accumulation of a sire's progeny records will increase the accuracy of the EPDs to a level in the .6 to .7 range with a high number of records. But to achieve accuracies above these levels the sire must also have actual progeny carcass records.

Should I consider any changes to current management practices regarding these new EPDs?

The only change would be the collection of replacement heifer ultrasound values if you are not currently collecting this data. Since typically these females are retained in the cow herd, over time a majority of the cow herd will obtain more accurate carcass EPDs as a result of this practice, as well as contribute to the accuracies of their sires' values.

What is the EPD that is abbreviated DtF?

This is a new EPD called Days to Finish that replaces the old Fat Thickness EPD. In looking at these values from a fat constant end point, we asked the question, if it was possible to predict sire differences in the time it took to reach that end point. The Days to Finish (DtF) EPD provides that tool.

How would you advise a breeder to use this new EPD?

We see this as a tool to compare sires once all other EPD criteria are met. For example, you set criteria for the growth and carcass EPDs and end up with a short list that contains several sires. Two sires that are of the greatest interest have DtF values of +15 and +5 respectively. Progeny of the sire with the +5 value would reach that constant fat end point 10 days sooner and represent a potential 10 days reduction in feed costs. Sires that are closer to the breed average warrant stronger consideration than either of the possible extremes.

Since the Grid Merit EPD was based on the previous set of carcass EPDs how has this value been affected?

As part of the revamped EPDs the AGA/CGA took a hard look at the previous Grid Merit EPD. In order to appropriately put emphasis on the primary carcass value driver, carcass weight, a new formula was derived utilizing the existing database of more than 6000 carcass records. Carcass Weight, along with both Yield and Quality Grade premiums and discounts, as well as discounts for light and heavy carcass weight were all factored into this equation to derive a more actual carcass value. As such we have renamed the EPD Carcass Value (CV) and it will still be represented as a carcass value. The goal will be to use this new Index EPD as the foundation to set some targets in the carcass area across a range of individual carcass EPDs.

Was the Feedlot Merit EPD impacted by these changes as well?

It was not directly impacted by the changes in these EPD as the EPDs that go into that calculation are the Weaning and Yearling Weight values. However, the underlying market values for feed and animal costs had not been updated since the origination of this EPD back in 2003. In consideration of some significant changes in the market to date, updated values were incorporated at this time.

How do these new EPDs benefit the typical breeder of Gelbvieh or Gelbvieh Balancer® genetics?

Gelbvieh influenced feedlot animals have consistently produced the carcass weight and ribeye size to provide the YG 1s and 2s desired by the packing industry. In today's climate where consumer demand and the Choice-Select spread has created demand for at the minimum low Choice carcasses, having tools that allow producers to breed animals to meet acceptable Quality Grade standards translates to improved profitability of those animals and increased demand at the feedlot whether these animals are marketed through a local sale barn, video auction, order buyer or if the producer retains ownership through the feeding process.

The new EPDs can be found on the CGA's website at www.gelbvieh.ca As well the latest sire summary can be downloaded at this site or a hard copy can be requested by calling the CGA office at 403-250-8640 for a cost of \$5.00.