

Jody Holthaus, Agent  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Livestock and Natural Resources

### **Not Polite to Talk About Politics or Religion in Mixed Company**

When I grew up there were some taboo subjects for mixed company, mostly Politics and Religion. It just wasn't a good idea to express your opinion on either. Today, with our social media ever present, there is no taboo. It's a lot to take in. Social media is not a fad, I watched a video that said if Facebook were a country, it was third largest in population, just before the United States. I have a note posted on my desk that says, "Before you send, you need to THINK! T is for, is it TRUE? H stands for is HELPFUL? I stands for is it *INSPIRING*, N is, is it NECESSARY? And the K is for, is it KIND? Maybe if all in social media would use THINK, we wouldn't have "fake news" or "alternative facts". Just saying.... The facts are: EPD's can change your herd! EPDs offer beef producers a tremendous opportunity to improve genetics within their herds. Since the majority of the genetic progress within a herd is a direct result of sire selection, EPDs should be given careful attention when choosing bulls. With the vast number of EPDs that are available for use, selection goals must be carefully established to determine which EPDs are of primary importance. Additionally, EPDs should be combined with other selection criteria, including structural and reproductive soundness, to determine which sires are most suitable for the operation.

Expected progeny differences (EPDs) provide estimates of the genetic value of an animal as a parent. Specifically, differences in EPDs between two individuals of the same breed predict differences in performance between their future offspring when each is mated to animals of the same average genetic merit. EPDs are calculated for birth, growth, maternal, and carcass traits and are reported in the same units of measurement as the trait (normally pounds). EPD values may be directly compared only between animals of the same breed. In other words, a birth weight EPD for a Charolais bull may not be directly compared to a birth weight EPD of a Hereford bull (unless an adjustment is made to account for breed differences). There are charts available to do Across Breed EPD comparisons. These are readily available on the internet, let me know if you need one.

EPDs are reported by most major beef breed associations, and are calculated using complex statistical equations and models. These statistical models use all known information on a particular animal to calculate its EPD. This information includes performance data on the animal itself, information from its ancestors (sire and dam, grandsire, great grandsire, maternal grandsire, etc.), collateral relatives (brothers and sisters), and progeny (including progeny that are parents themselves). In short, virtually all performance data that relate to the animal of interest are used to calculate its EPD. These performance records are adjusted for such factors as age and sex of the animal, and age of the dam prior to inclusion in EPD databases. These adjustment factors allow performance records to be fairly compared in the analysis. Additionally, genetic merit of mates is accounted in evaluating progeny information. Therefore, progeny records are not influenced by superior or inferior mates. The statistical analysis used for EPD calculation also accounts for the effects of environment (nutrition, climate, geographical location, etc.) that exist between herds. These environmental effects can be estimated due to the widespread use of artificial insemination. Through AI, the same bull can be used in several herds across the country. These common sires create genetic links between herds with differing environments and serve as the foundation for evaluation of performance data and EPD calculation across herds. For these reasons, animals with published EPDs within a breed may be directly compared regardless of their age and origin. Finally, the genetic relationships that exist between various traits are also considered in the EPD calculations