



A Successful Performance Program

In order to do a better job of serving commercial customers, Limousin breeders must continue to make a priority out of producing cattle with documented quality and predictability. This can be accomplished by appropriately adapting and using both existing and new technologies. The following thoughts are provided as items to consider when developing a more comprehensive performance program for your herd.

- * **Evaluate animals in contemporary groups.** A contemporary group is a group of Limousin cattle of the same sex and percentage blood category, born within 90 days of one another, which were managed together. Contemporary groups should always be designated through use of the creep vs. no creep codes and breeder management codes when submitting performance data in order for the data to contribute to calculation of EPDs. Obtaining valid comparisons between animals in groups is essential to formulating reliable EPDs.
- * In order to ensure that animals are evaluated in contemporary groups, **develop a reproductive management program that includes planned and controlled breeding season(s) of 90 days or less.** This will help identify reproductively inferior cows so that they can be eliminated from the herd. This also makes it easier to manage the cows from a nutritional standpoint. Restricting the length of the breeding season(s) may be especially important in small herds where it is often difficult to get many animals in the same contemporary group.

- * **Make your records count by planning ahead.** All calves in a weaning group should be weighed and evaluated on the same day, when the youngest calf is at least 160 days old and the oldest calf is not over 250 days of age. Yearling weights and other yearling information must be taken at least 140 days after weaning and when the animals are between 330 and 450 days of age. Use the date calculation wheel and instructions provided in your NALF Members' Manual. If there is a 90-day age range among cattle in a given group, there is only one possible weaning date to collect data in order for all animals to remain in a contemporary group.
- * **Ideally, data should be reported after each phase of production** – after calving, following weaning and after processing yearlings. Timely reporting of performance data contributes to more accurate EPDs for all Limousin breeders.
- * **Routinely update your herd inventory** using NALF's online inventory management tool to record reasons why animals leave the herd. Reports from NALF regarding average EPDs for your herd will be more meaningful if your inventory information is up to date.
- * **Consider collecting data on additional traits.** Genetic documentation of traits such as scrotal circumference, mature cow weight and condition, pelvic dimensions, disposition, and ultrasound ribeye area, rib fat and percent intramuscular fat will help position the Limousin breed to stay ahead of the competition in the years ahead.



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