



Breed Improvement Article

Limousin for the Commercial Industry

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Spring is the time that many producers spend at least some time in the process of replacing genetics in their herds. It is well documented that crossbreeding is a valuable way to improve profitability. The positive impacts on health, fertility, longevity and growth are hard to ignore. Key to this process is selection of complementary breeds, and further to this is selection within the breeds chosen. So where does Limousin fit in this picture?

Limousin cattle can provide valuable hybrid vigour to most cowherds. Research work conducted by a variety of organizations shows that a combination of roughly 50:50 British: Continental fits most mainstream markets. Limousin can readily balance yield and rib-eye area, against marbling provided by British breeds. As well, there are developing specialty markets for higher percentage continental cattle and cattle with higher lean content.

Calving Ease

Limousin cattle are noted for their calving ease characteristics. As the average age of producers increases, and cowherds either increase in size or producers work off farm, this is becoming even more essential. Limousin are a good choice in this regard.

EPD Toolkit - calving ease (CE), birth weight (BW), gestation length (GEST).

Weaning Weight

For producers marketing weaned calves, growth to weaning is important. For this reason Limousin breeders report weaning information on their calves and participate in genetic evaluation. Limousin provide weaning weight EPD.

EPD Toolkit – weaning weight (WW)

Docility

One area where Limousin have made huge strides in the last several years is in the quietness of the cattle. Many breeders record docility scores on their cattle, and this information is included in the only evaluation of its type. Ask your bull supplier if they record docility scores and use docility information in their decision making.

EPD Toolkit – docility (DOC)

Post-Weaning Gain

It is widely acknowledged that Limousin provide advantages in terms of feed efficiency. Further to this and with the realization that, aside from feed, yardage is one of the greatest costs to feeding cattle, Limousin breeders have developed a tool to focus on growth rate on feed.

EPD Toolkit – yearling weight (YW), post-weaning gain (PWG)

Carcass

Carcass characteristics are becoming more important as producers retain ownership longer and/or market directly to feedlots. The CLA works with breeders to collect and process ultrasound and carcass data and includes this information in the North American evaluation of carcass characteristics. Ask your bull supplier for their ultrasound and carcass information.

EPD Toolkit – carcass weight (CW), rib-eye area (REA), fat (FAT), yield grade (YG), marbling (MARB)

Fertility, Longevity, Productivity

The CLA recognizes that many producers also incorporate Limousin-cross females into their replacement female programs. One of the largest costs to beef production is cow depreciation, or culling cows before they have paid their way. Another key area of cost/return is cow maintenance and cow productivity. For this reason Limousin breeders have tools such as Breeding Soundness Exams, and complete cowherd calving ease, fertility and production reporting.

EPD Toolkit – scrotal circumference (SC), maternal calving ease (CEM), stayability (ST), milk (MILK)

Balance and Experience

Obviously a perfect bull does not exist. For producers using LM genetics as a terminal cross, traits such as milk and female longevity are of little concern. For those retaining replacements out of LM sires, these maternal traits increase in importance. As well, for breeders who own their cattle longer, traits such as post-weaning growth and carcass characteristics gain in importance. These traits are also important (although less so) for producers retaining females, and considering owning calves through feeding/harvest in the future. By being aware of the feeding/carcass characteristics of your cowherds genetics, future risk can be greatly reduced as marketing systems are changed.

EPDs provide a way to compare the potential sire genetics based on the expected performance of their calves across herds and environments. By looking at the genetics of cattle you use that work for you and also those that don't, and understanding your long term goals it becomes possible to find the right bull for your needs. This will be a bull that balances several traits to provide the best fit for your operation. The following breed average EPDs are designed to provide a frame of reference for this process.

Breed Average EPD (Current Population)														
Gest	CE	BW	WW	YW	PWG	CEM	Milk	SC	DOC	ST	CW	REA	YG	MARB
(Days)	(%)	(lbs)	(lbs)	(lbs)	(lbs)	(%)	(lbs)	(cm)	(%)	(%)	(lbs)	(in ²)	(%)	(units)
-0.7	6.1	2.0	36.7	69.1	32.4	2.7	18.5	0.3	16.4	13.2	16.1	0.12	0.04	0.00

Table Descriptions

CE – higher values indicate more calving ease (less calving difficulty)

BW – lower values indicate lighter birthweights

WW – higher values indicate heavier weaning weight

YW – higher values indicate heavier yearling weights

PWG – higher values indicate more post-weaning growth

CEM – higher values indicate more calving ease in first calf replacement heifers (less calving difficulty in replacement heifers)

Milk – higher values indicate heavier weaning weights due to mothering/milk production

SC – higher values indicate larger scrotal circumference at a year of age

DOC – higher values indicate quieter calves

ST – higher values indicate an increased likelihood of females remaining in the herd to age 6

CW – higher values indicate heavier carcass weights

REA – higher values indicate larger rib-eye area

YG – lower values indicate more yield grade 1s (increased lean yield)

Fat – lower values indicate less backfat

Marb – higher values indicate more marbling