



Docility – A Canadian Limousin Association Fact Sheet

Docility is consistently identified by Limousin breeders and their customers as one of the key focus areas for the breed. Larger farms, an aging farm population, and the fact that farming is often a family affair mean that temperament is increasingly important.

Apart from the obvious reasons of safety, research strongly indicates that cattle with calm temperaments gain weight more rapidly, produce more tender meat and exhibit less carcass bruising than cattle with more nervous temperaments. This same field of research has also shown that cattle with nervous or aggressive temperaments maintain that temperament over time.

Temperament has been shown to be highly heritable in Limousin cattle (0.40). This means that selection pressure on temperament can rapidly improve docility.

Temperament scoring

Limousin calves should be scored at weaning using the 6 point system shown in Table 1. It is important to try to determine differences between calves and to score all calves in the pen. Weaning is an optimal time to score calves as they exhibit the most variation due to limited exposure to people when nursing.

Docility Score		Description
1	Docile	Mild disposition, gentle and easily handled, stands and moves slowly during processing, undisturbed, settled, somewhat dull, does not pull on headgate when in chute, exits chute calmly
2	Restless	Quieter than average but slightly restless, may be stubborn during processing, may try to back out of chute, pulls back on headgate, some flicking of tail, exits chute promptly
3	Nervous	Typical temperament, manageable but nervous and impatient, a moderate amount of struggling, movement and tail flicking, repeated pushing and pulling on headgate, exits chute briskly
4	Flighty (Wild)	Jumpy and out of control, quivers and struggles violently, may bellow and froth at mouth, continuous tail flicking, defecates and urinates during processing, frantically runs fenceline and may jump when penned individually, exhibits long flight distance (how close animal will allow you to come to them before moving away) and exits chute wildly
5	Aggressive	Similar to score 4 but with added aggressive behaviour, fearful, extreme agitation, continuous movement which may include jumping and bellowing while in chute, exits chute frantically and may exhibit attack behaviour when handled alone
6	Very Aggressive	Extremely aggressive temperament, "killers", pronounced attack behaviour

Genetic Evaluation

The CLA conducts a regular genetic evaluation of temperament. The heritability of docility in Limousin cattle is 0.40 which means that genetic progress can be made quite rapidly. Higher Docility EPD (DOC) values indicate cattle with genetics to produce quieter calves.

EPD	Population
18.0 and higher	Animals in the top 1/3 for docility (quieter)
13.9	Average temperament
10.1 and lower	Animals in the bottom 1/3 for docility ((more nervous)

Example:

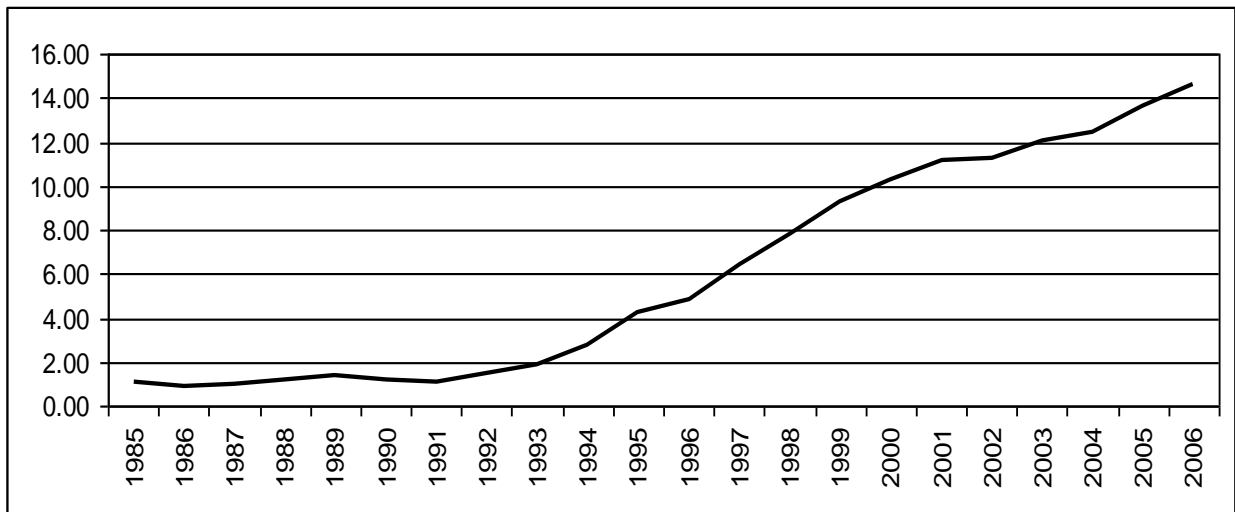
Two potential sires, one with an EPD of 25.0 and one with an EPD of 5.0.

Sire A	25.0
Sire B	5.0
Difference	20.0

If sire A and B are mated to the same cowherd, we would expect 20% more of the calves from Sire A to be calmer. In other words fewer calves from Sire A would be flighty or nervous.

Genetic Trend

Genetic trend shows how the Limousin population is moving over time. The North American trend indicates that breeders are putting significant focus on improving temperament of their cattle. In order to continue this improvement it is essential that breeders continue to collect docility scores on their calves and use the resulting docility EPD in their selection decisions.



Temperament is extremely important in beef cattle selection for safety, productivity and meat quality. Limousin breeders have well developed scientific tools to improve docility in their cattle.

Docility EPD can be readily found on registered cattle at <http://search.limousin.com>.

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