

Beef Business



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Summer Homework

I hope that the dog days of summer have not been too rough on you and your herd to this point. Hopefully, the moisture levels have been enough to keep your pastures and hay fields in good order and your cows fed and happy. It sure is more enjoyable to watch cows work on raising those big, healthy calves to weaning when there's green grass at their feet. As important as your cows are to the operation, keeping them happy is top priority!

While this is a topic that has been discussed in this space before, I believe the idea of genomic testing your females is an idea worth mentioning again. Compiling as much information on the base of your genetic pool is important for many reasons, and there are methods through ASA that allow you to take this step in your program in a cost effective manner. With so little margin for error in this business, having as much information as possible at your disposal is beneficial.

The greatest benefit to genomic testing heifers and cows is the increase in EPD accuracy achieved through testing. While we may see some movement in the actual EPD figures, the increase in accuracy is the primary outcome. By incorporating the genomic marker information gleaned from testing with pedigree and individual performance data, we get a better picture of the genetic capabilities of that female. The increase in accuracy for a female's EPDs, especially for weight traits, is equivalent to what we would see with nearly a lifetime of offspring performance records turned in on her. The investment in a genomic test can help you have a clearer picture of the best future performers in your heifer pen, giving you the option to remove heifers before breeding and incurring further expense to get her to calving.

One of the less discussed advantages

of genomic testing young animals is the ability to uncover parentage discrepancies before getting them into production. In most large sets of animals that are tested at ASA, we find parentage results that do not match the animal's registration certificate. Every time I have encountered this with heifer groups, it is a case of mistaken parentage being unintentional. On the ranch, things just happen. Bulls get out and breed a cow without being seen. Cows swap calves at birth. Calves believed to be a late AI calf happen to be an early natural bred baby. Without parent verification, these pedigree errors would pass on uncorrected through the Shorthorn herd book. We can make sure pedigree records are correct currently, and having the markers on file can ensure that we verify pedigree records on her future progeny.

If you are collecting weights on your heifers already, you likely already qualify for discounted 100k genomic testing through the ASA Genomically Enhanced Female Program. The price incentive program for heifers is two-tiered, with recorded weights qualifying for a \$15/head discount (\$40 for the 100k genomic test), and an additional credit to those who collect feed intake or carcass ultrasound data on their heifers. The cost of testing is only \$20/head if your heifers qualify for both discounts. If you have considered doing carcass ultrasound on those heifers, the additional discount for genomic testing can finance your ultrasound project while adding multiple forms of data to the database. You must test 80% of the yearling heifers that are on your ASA inventory in order to qualify.

If you are looking to do genomic testing on your cow herd, there are a couple specifications that must be met. First, you will need to test all of your ASA-registered cows that currently haven't been genomic tested to qualify

for the discounted pricing. Turning in either an udder score or a mature cow weight for her most recently recent year's calf is also a requirement. By meeting those specifications, you can get 100k genomic tests (same test as the yearling heifers) done on your cows for only \$20 per head. While testing either yearling heifers or cows in this program, you can include additional tests (genetic conditions, homozygous polled, myostatin, etc.) at their regular price. If you want to donor qualify a female, you can add on the TH, PHA, DS bundle at its usual listed price and still get the discount for the 100K genomic portion of the donor requirements.

To take advantage of these discounted genomic tests, you must enroll in the program prior to sending in samples. To reserve space for your heifers, just send me an email (matt@shorthorn.org). I will make sure all the information is in order for your cattle to qualify and inform office staff that your samples will be shipped and the discount is to be applied to your DNA order. There are a limited number of spots available for these discounted tests through 2021. Please feel free to reach out with any questions you might have about the Genomically Enhanced Female Project, or genomic testing in general. 📧

