

The B.C. Hereford
BULL-ETIN

Keith Miller

On March 15 Dr. Denny Crews, research scientist from the Lethbridge Research Station came to British Columbia to talk about his work on genetics, including ultrasound measurements for carcass data. He talked to a group of test centre contributors and other interested producers at Keremeos, and following his presentation, he fielded a variety of questions for about an hour.

Here in B.C., we have been talking a lot about ultrasound and the need to find Hereford sires produce steers that would grade AAA to suit the packers demands for today's market. Dr. Crews seemed to believe that the testing for ultrasound was somewhat inaccurate and the real measurement came from slaughter, and of course you do not want to kill your herd sire to find out what he produces. Thus, here is a need for progeny testing. To that end he felt that the agreement made between Dr. Kee Jim and the Canadian Hereford Association to tag steers of many genotypes and follow up on the slaughter information would prove very useful to the Hereford breed.

Dr. Crews gave the meeting a short talk about EPDs and how this tool can be used to improve your herd. Recently, carcass traits have been shown to be less heritable, while milk remains highly heritable and of course, accuracy of the information is of the utmost importance. That is why he stressed the need for the breeders to send as much data as possible to help the breed identify and improve in different areas.

Crews felt that the 1990s could be described as the carcass trait era where more work has been done on carcass data than ever before. Traits have been measured in progeny test trials but you would end up with traits on bulls that were already at the end of their breeding lifetime. Using ultrasound, the trait leaders for carcass can be identified early in their breeding years and ultrasound

remains the best way to find them. However, accuracy of the carcass EPD remains the key to all the estimates. Live ultrasound measurements and those at slaughter are not always accurate. It has also been found that animals that have higher marbling traits have less lean meat yield.

The Hereford breed has many qualities that make it the backbone of the beef industry and, while we need to do carcass work to find the superior sires for marbling, Crews warned that we should not get caught up in single trait selection, as we did a few years ago on frame score, and end up losing some of the strengths of the breed. In the work he has done on the Maternal Productivity of the Hereford breed, he said the breed remains strong in the maternal traits needed to be a great commercial cow and we should capitalize on those strengths.

It is evident that the weather will again play a big part in the agriculture industry. In some parts of the province there has been some moisture, but still not enough to fill the water holes and give beef breeders the confidence to expand their herds, or in some cases to remain the same size. This, in turn, will put a great deal of pressure on the bull market for all breeds.

The Evergreen Sale coming up on May 3 looks like it will be a good event. In addition to the sale there will also be a B.C. Junior Hereford Field Day on May 4 and another at Salmon Arm on May 27. Both will be forerunners to Bonanza 2002 coming up in July. It looks like it will be a busy summer for the Hereford industry.