Developing Bulls

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six months of age and bulls attempting to mate as early as seven months even though they are not yet fertile. Needless to say, by 14 and a half to 16 months of age both heifers and bulls are very fertile.

In addition, most Star cattle are slick haired. By next year, most heifer and bull calves will be lighter colored - yellow or white. Both characteristics provide an additional edge in terms of heat tolerance. Recent analyses of data also reveal that calves that are slick compared to non-slick calves are about 25 pounds heavier at weaning. A litmus test for adaptability of Star cattle is that in 2015 the total direct and overhead cost per cow was less than $300. However, it should be stated that 2015 was a good year in terms of non-freezing winter temps and abundant rains (totaling about 42 inches).

Early bull management begins with calving. In the fall, weights of calves are taken at approximately seven months of age. Then 205-day adjusted weights are calculated, which averaged 573 pounds for bulls in 2015.

This is followed by a genetic evaluation to generate EPDs (expected progeny differences). EPDs are used in part to promote sales of bulls, for example, with negative EPDs for birth weight and negative or near zero EPDs for milk. However, selection is not driven by EPDs; rather bulls and heifers are selected from the best cows in terms of their ability to maintain good body condition and health and raise a good calf year after year. For this reason, Star cattle could be considered as a maternal composite breed.

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