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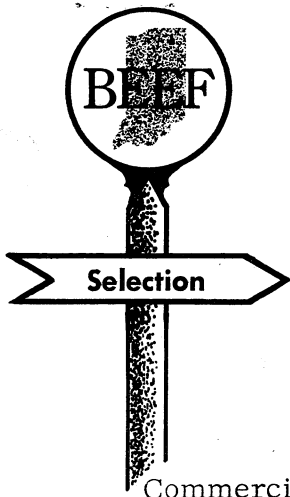
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Wilson, L. L.; Drewry, K. J.; Garrigus, R. R.; MacDonald, K. G.; and Mayo, Henry, "Beef On-Farm Performance Testing – Why and How to Keep Weaning Records" (1964). *Historical Documents of the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service*. Paper 103.
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Beef On-Farm Performance Testing-- why and how to keep weaning records

by L. L. Wilson, K. J. Drewry, R. R. Garrigus, K. G. MacDonald and Henry Mayo, *Animal Sciences Department*

Commercial and purebred beef breeders should continually search for ways to increase profits. Since the profit from any livestock enterprise depends on having high producing animals, breeders should accurately evaluate the production of each animal in the herd. Many commercial and purebred beef breeders use performance testing to help select productive replacement cattle and to cull cows.

Production testing requires several calculations and accurate recording of data. Therefore Indiana cattlemen may want to have their performance records summarized on electronic computers. The Indiana Cooperative Extension Service will provide free electronic record summarization on a limited basis during 1965. Electronic processing in other states has provided permanent, accurate, standardized production records for herd improvement.

The purpose of this publication is to help Indiana cattlemen enter the weaning phase of an On-Farm Performance Testing Program.

Producers may obtain copies of the form "Beef Cattle On-Farm Performance Testing-Weaning Record" from the County Extension Agent (sample attached). This is a two-part (yellow and pink) form which makes a duplicate copy without carbon paper. Care must be taken in completing these forms to reduce errors in recording data.

STEPS IN COMPLETING THE WEANING RECORDS

After Breeding Season

Fill in Breed, Name, Address and County as it should appear on the official herd record.

Do not write in the farm code or breed spaces.

Fill in Year 65 and class
Year (5-6)

1
Class (9) The **year** in which the calves will be weighed is the figure used. In herds consisting of a combination of purebred, grade or crossbred calves, use the class code which applies to the majority of the calves if all calves are to be indexed on the same basis. If each class is to be indexed separately, then separate weaning forms should be used for each breed or class. Do not fill in weaning date until the calves are weighed.

Cow identification: One of the most direct benefits of performance testing is the identification of high and low producing cows. To find, cull, and replace cows that are not paying their way, a permanent cow numbering system should be used. Cows may be identified by neck chains, ear tattoos, hip or horn brands, or eartags. For commercial herds, brands are usually better because they are permanent and easier to read in the field. There are many good ways to number cows. Two methods are given be-

low which include the cow number and year of birth.

Cow No. 160 may be calf No. 1 or No. 16 born in 1960.

Cow No. 4161 may be calf No. 41 or No. 416 born in 1961.

Only five numbers or letters can be used on the weaning form. Each cow must have a permanent and different number.

Fill out the dam information on the official weaning record. Each cow in the breeding herd should be listed. The age of dam must be the cow's age (in years) when the calf will be weaned.

		Dam										
		Number					Age					
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20				
1		.2	.9	.4	.3	1	1					
2		.	L	.3	.4	1	0					
3		R	E	.4	.6	.9	.5					

Sire Number: Three spaces are allowed on the weaning record for sire identification. Usually a code is used, ie:

Sire No. JC7 is Johnson's Crusader 7

Sire No. 2 is Doe's Excellence
9394678

Each different sire must have a different code number (if sire is known.) Once a sire is assigned a code number, he should have the same number in all following years. Fill in sire number; if unknown, leave blank.

		Dam										Sire		
		Number					Age					Number		
		14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23			
		.2	.9	.4	.3	1	1	J	C	7				
		.	L	.3	.4	1	0	.	2					
		R	E	.4	.6	.9	.5	J	C	7				

Put the records in a safe place until the cows have calved.

At Calving

Usually information taken on the cows and calves at calving time is recorded in a pocket notebook in the field and later transferred to the official weaning record. A list of the cows in the herd may be made in the pocket notebook prior to calving.

As the calves are born, permanently identify each calf. This number should be the one which the animal would retain if it is kept in the breeding herd. Eartags and tattoos are preferred. Record the sex, birth date, and make notes of any abnormal calving (stillbirth, deformed, or accidental death.) Birth weights may or may not be taken.

After Calving

When most or all of the cows have calved, fill in the calf number, sex code and birth date on the official weaning form. The sex code (1 = bull, 2 = heifer, 3 = steer) must be the code that will apply when the calves are weighed.

If actual birth weights are not taken, leave birth weight blank on the official weaning record. The following estimates will be used for males:

Small breeds = 60 pounds (Angus)

Medium breeds = 70 pounds (Shorthorn, Hereford)

Large breeds = 80 pounds (Charolais)

Heifers will be assumed five pounds lighter than males.

Example: Cow No. 2943 had a heifer calf on January 1, 1964

Cow No. L34 had a bull calf on February 28, 1964

Cow No. RE469 had a bull calf (castrated) on March 9, 1964

Dam					Calf																		
		Sire							Sex	Cal.	Birth date				Birth								
Number		Age		Number			Number				code ^a /	rec. ^b /	mo.		day		weight						
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37
.2	.9	.4	.3		1.1		J. C	.7			1	6		4	2		.1		0	1			
.	.L	.3	.4		1.0		.	.2			1	7	6	4	1		.2		2	8			7.8
R	.E	.4	.6	9	.5		J. C	.7			1	8	6	4	3		.3		0	9			4.8
.														

Birth weight was not taken on calf 164 from cow No. 2943.

All animals recorded on the weaning form must be less than 10 months of age at the time of weighing. Some herds with two calving periods per year may weigh weaning calves at two different times.

Since animals of widely different ages cannot be accurately compared on the basis of average lifetime daily gain, only calves older than 130 days and calves younger than 280 days will be indexed at weaning. The calves should be with the cows until at least the day before weighing.

The weaning record of the cow herd primarily measures the mothering ability of the individual cows. On the other hand, yearling gain and type score depend more on the calf's own abilities. In order to receive full benefits from performance testing, both weaning and yearling weights should be taken on all prospective replacement animals.

Contact the County Extension Agent and arrange a date for weighing and grading. The best time for weighing is when most of the calves are approximately 200 days of age. Perhaps several herds in your county could be weighed on the same day.

At Weighing Time

A representative of the Extension Service or a selected, trained committee of local breeders may weigh and grade the calves. At weighing time be sure to complete the calving record for each calf.

The calving record (cal. rec.b) codes and an explanation of their use are:

1. Weaned calf (normally raised by the dam)
2. Twin
3. Nurse cow (unless adopted by another cow of the same breed as the calf's dam)
4. Calf died, 1 week (scours, other sickness)
5. Calf died, accident (freezing, drowning)
6. Premature (aborted, born before full term)
7. Deformed (born with a permanent abnormality)
8. Dead calf (calf born dead)
9. Missing (lost, or otherwise not around at weighing time)
0. Dry cow (no record of cow having a calf)

If a cow has twin calves, recopy the dam's information at the end of the herd listing since one line is necessary for each calf.

Weaning weight and type score (average over all of the graders) is filled in on the official weaning record by the County Extension Agent or the designated weighing committee. Creep code is also completed (1 = non-creep fed; 2 = creep-fed.) Weaning date (ie: Sept. 3) must also be filled in

. 0 . 9 . 0 . 3 .
Mo. Da.

Weaning date (10-13)

The official weaning records may be used in the field to record weights and grades. However, be sure to place a stiff cardboard between the weaning records when writing on these forms to avoid marking on more than one set at a time.

As soon as possible after weighing, send the completed yellow copy to:

Beef Performance Testing
Animal Sciences Department
Purdue University
Lafayette, Indiana 47907

The pink copy is kept by the producer.

The records will be processed and returned directly to the breeder. After records are accumulated for two or three years, the average progeny performance of the cows and bulls in the herd may also be provided.

Performance testing is neither involved nor expensive. And it can fit into a small or large, commercial or purebred herd. The one requirement for a successful program and a profitable herd is for the cattlemen to have the desire to improve toward consistent, correct goals.

Breed _____

Name _____

Address _____

County _____

Beef Cattle On-Farm Performance Testing—weaning record

Purdue University, Cooperative Extension Service, Lafayette, Indiana

	Dam					Calf														Remarks											
	Sire					Sex code ^a	Cal. rec. ^b	Birth date		Birth weight		Weaning weight		Type score		Crp. code ^c															
Farm code (1-4)	Number	Age		Number	Number					mo.	day																				
Year (5-6)	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	
1																															
2																															
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Weight Supervisor _____