

Innovation in Management



PROFILE – TRACEBACK

Candace By

As technologies come along, it isn't easy to keep up. Most of us have learned bits and pieces of the applications available from the products we already own. Learning their entire capabilities just isn't a priority, we know what we need to know, to do what we need to do. Here is a technology that uses two systems most of us already own, to make our life easier and more efficient – a smart phone and a computer.

TraceBack is a data management program that assists producers with simple data capture methods and decision making support. It was originally developed to assist veterinary services for commercial producers, but has evolved beyond all vet services to a data management system for many facets of the cattle industry.

Dr. Troy Drake, Kathryn, Alberta, found there were many programs on the market that did specific things,

but none tied them all together in one user friendly package. Working with his clients through his veterinary practice made the need for such a system apparent. Through need comes invention, and the development of this program is no exception.

“One of the key elements of this online animal tracking system is its entirely web based form.”

There is no program to buy, meaning there will be no need to purchase updates down the road. Improvements to the system are ongoing and will automatically be available to each user everytime they work in the system.

Gone are the days of writing it down, then spending the time later

sitting at a desk attempting to read what you wrote, possibly months before, while entering it in a computer. This time consuming step has been eliminated.

Currently their clients are 80% commercial and 20% purebred.

Age verification information can be shared directly to the CCIA eliminating a duplication of data entry.

For purebred breeders, the painstaking need to enter data in two places is also eliminated. It isn't going to replace a breed registry program, but the information can be aligned to assist producers and the association to get what they need with only one entry.

Inventory reconciliation is a key part to management. If



Dr. Troy Drake

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you are tracking the number of treatments over a period of years, the numbers mean nothing if they are not accurately compared to the total number of animals.

Traditionally, cattlemen have worked on approximate inventory numbers. By being able to adjust inventory through your phone when doing chores or checking cows, your records are always current.

A surprise benefit from this has developed as banks require accountability of numbers, managements, etc. The system actually provides an inventory report for banks that can be submitted monthly. It can provide a staged report showing the numbers of weaned bulls, weaned heifers, unweaned calves, bred females, herdbulls, etc.

Daily reports are also available for the producer to use as he proceeds through calving season.

Reports on individual animals are available to assist the producer in managements decisions. Cow reports provide progeny history and data on

the calves, like weaning weight ADG, postweaning ADG, carcass weight ADG and cow calving intervals, to name a few. It averages all of the years and gives a ranking for each cow in the herd for each trait. This is a comparison only within the producer's herd and does not compare herds, which of course is just not possible due to varying management practices.

Cows are scored in categories of Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze and Standard. Using this information for selecting replacements can alter the decision making. By scanning heifer calves when they come in the chute, you know if the heifer comes from a Platinum cow or a Standard cow. Based on a 200 cow herd, that wants to keep 50 replacement heifers, it is suggested they sort off 60 of the highest ranking heifers in the herd. When this is done based on the data, producers should then go through them and select visually for conformation, disposition, etc.

Breeding group selection can also change. If you have a group of cows that were Bronze or Standard because they have produced lighter muscled

calves, the decision can be made to breed them to the heavier muscled bull in the battery to improve their production in the herd.

It should be noted the ranking of cows is gender adjusted for steers and heifers to make it fair for cow comparison.

The system does not only assist in management of the cow herd, but also assists by providing sire group information based on production. Progeny are matched back to their sire allowing comparison and ranking of each sire in the herd based on production from the data collected. Trait profiles on sires can then be used in future breeding group management decisions.

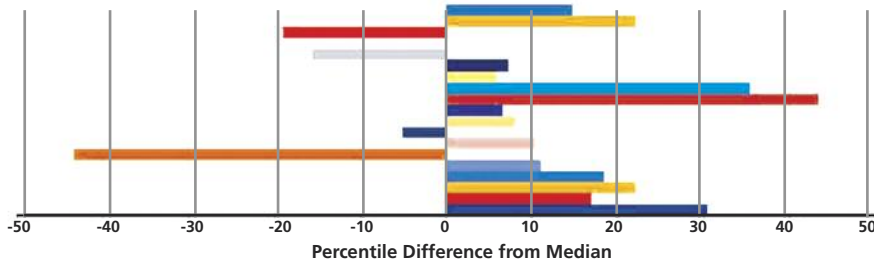
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“Carcass information can be tracked through the CCIA number and information can automatically be imported back to the producer program linking it to the appropriate animal.”



Rolling Cow Report

Report Generated 6/14/2012



Cow: 4 S O **Calves:** c0 4 Y c0 4 X c0 4 W c0 4 U

Herd Classification: Gold Plus 89

Cow Dam: 52 P O

Sire:

Location Jerene F

Gender

Calf-F

Calf-M

Calf-M

Calf-M

Cow Weight 1410 [33] **DOB** 4/25/2011 4/10/2010 3/20/2009 2/16/2008

Calving Interval 388 [42] 380 386 398

Weight Date 10/1/2009 10/28/2011 10/26/2010 10/4/2009 10/15/2008

Birth Weight 77 [13] 65 80 85

Weaning Info

Wean Age 206 [49] 186 199 196 242

Tx PreW 0 [0] 0 0 0 0

Wean Wt 621 [21] 580 575 635 695

G-Adj Wean Wt 621 580 575 635 695

Wean ADG 3.02 [12] 3.12 2.89 3.21 2.87

G-Adj Wean ADG 3.02 3.12 2.89 3.21 2.87

Calf Wean Ratio 45.00% [15] 45.00%

G-Adj Wean Ratio 45.00% 45.00%

Feedlot Info

Tx PostW 1 [10] 0 0 0 1

Total Days on Feed 204 [34] 161 226 220 189

Interim Fdlt ADG 3.45 [30] 3.42 3.42 3.42 3.52

Final Fdlt ADG 2.97 [45] 2.66 3.14 3.28 2.81

Wean:Feed Ratio 1.0 [18] 1.2 0.9 1.0 1.0

Carcass Info

Aid 410.25 [37] 367.00 425.00 418.00 431.00

Fat Thickness (in.) 0.27 [64] 0.36 0.24 0.24 0.24

Rib Eye Area (sq in.) 12.58 [22] 12.00 12.60 14.30 11.40

Carcass Weight 739.25 [22] 636.40 770.80 814.60 735.20

Carc-ADG 1.80 [27] 1.73 1.81 1.95 1.71

Marbling Score 444.50 [24] 452.00 496.00 417.00 413.00

Quality Grade AAA CA-AAA CA-AAA AAA AAA

Yield Grade 1 2 1 1 1

Live-ADG 3.00 [27] 2.89 3.02 3.25 2.64

LMY% 60.45[7] 59.36 60.63 62.31 59.50

Carcass Premium/Discount (\$/lb) 0.10 [4] 0.08 0.13 0.10 0.10



Feedlots can provide data of ADG, etc., which can be linked right back to the calf and cow of the producer. Carcass data is also included in a producer's records.”

This is a great asset to the commercial producer. Often bulls are retained until they fail a semen test or hurt themselves. With the management reports readily available it is easy to cull the bulls that are not producing and replace them with bulls that possess the traits required to increase the profits of the program.

For producers that run multi sires within one pasture, the answers are still available. It is recommended that producers do a SNP (single nucleotide polymorphism) profile on their young herdbulls. This provides valuable information to the producer. It is also important as it makes parentage verifying calves much more economical. If you have a complete panel done on the herdsires, the calves will require fewer snips to parentage verify and will keep the cost down. For producers that do not run multi-sire pastures, this is one cost that can be eliminated.

Producers have also gained information on the serving capacity of their bull battery. Some bulls will serve more cows year after year, in comparison to other bulls in the program. This is directly related to fertility and can affect the future fertility in replacement females. It provides a management opportunity to eliminate possibly infertile cattle from the future of the program.

Even if commercial producers are not recording birth weights or calving ease information, death loss in under two weeks of age is usually an indication of calving difficulty. This too, is included in a sire's profile

and can assist in increasing production in the future.

Carcass data is also traced back to the sire, as are replacements kept by each sire.

Each herdsire is given a Sire Value Added \$\$, over and above the mean of the herd. It tells the producers what value the bull is adding to the herd. Bulls are ranked as HMB (heavy muscled bulls), CEB (calving ease bulls) and QGB (quality grade bulls). In the future this information can be used to match bulls with cows for breeding.



The entire system allows the producer to enhance his management decisions based on science and data. It all comes in an extremely easy and user friendly package.

TraceBack encourages retained ownership of calves throughout the system. They facilitate a partnership program to assist with investment, feeding and marketing of all calves enrolled in their program.

It started with a couple of guys buying a minimum of 10% of a producer's calves, up to 75%; depending on the financial situation of the client.

It's been fairly successful and they now have seedstock producers



Purebred breeders can get data back on the progeny of the herdbulls they sell.”

participating that sell bulls to the clients and wish to invest in the calves as share owners.

As it became popular, grain farmers and other sectors that needed to defer tax could buy a percentage instead of a pen share at a feedlot. Often dealing with people they knew.

Some smaller feedlots used to feed these cattle and sometimes want in as well.

So in the end it all comes down to cost and as it turns out, it isn't as high as one might think. The cost schedule is based on three levels of the program: Silver, Gold and Platinum. The Silver level provides the main program, smart phone app, capture of all records, treatments, movements, sales, bull evaluations and access to the retained ownership program. Most producers start at this level and as they learn about the information available and advantages of more, consider the move to the next phase.

Gold provides the CCIA links, a detailed feeding module and breed association links.

The Platinum level offers custom protocols for health treatments and more indepth customized information based on the producers requirements.

With the margins in the livestock industry so volatile knowing more about how your cattle can become more profitable is important. The TraceBack system allows all segments of the industry to share information and improve the quality of the end product.

For information about TraceBack, contact:

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