

IGS: Empowering Commercial Cattle Producers

by Dr. Ben Crites, ASA and IGS Director of Commercial and Industry Relations

International Genetic Solutions (IGS) is more than a genetic evaluation; it's a coalition of progressive beef cattle associations and industry stakeholders working together to advance genetic improvement and long-term beef industry profitability. IGS represents a shift from breed-centered thinking to industry-centered leadership. It is a platform for sharing ideas, perspectives, and data. More data shared from multiple sources means more powerful prediction — for all.

Backed by data from around the world, IGS EPD are the gold standard for accuracy and prediction. The genetic selection tools available empower commercial producers and seedstock providers alike to increase the rate of genetic improvement and profit potential.

Collaboration

The IGS Multi-breed Genetic Evaluation is the world's largest evaluation of its kind, representing more than 24 million cattle and more than 800,000 genotypes. By evaluating all breeds and breed combinations, IGS leverages more information for improved, science-backed prediction.

Through shared data from multiple industry partners, IGS helps fuel profitability and, ultimately, beef supply by producing a more economically efficient, user-friendly, and directly comparable evaluation. More data results in more confident selection, simplified decision-making, and improved precision across all production systems.

The IGS Multi-breed Genetic Evaluation works through full collaboration among partner associations. Partners submit new information each week, and those records — representing more than 24 million cattle — are processed together in a single system.

Animals are still compared within their individual contemporary groups, but IGS is able to link the different datasets together via common sires used across associations/partners. **The result is one unified, highly accurate set of genetic predictions that benefits all participating associations and the commercial producers they serve.**

Directly Comparable Evaluation

A unique attribute of the IGS Multi-breed Genetic Evaluation is the ability to capture the power of shared data across multiple breed associations into one genetic evaluation. **As a result, EPD are delivered on a common base and are comparable among participating breed partners.** This is revolutionary and a huge shift in the mindset from the traditional aspect of breed associations working independently.

For producers this means that there is no longer a requirement to identify and incorporate different adjustment factors when working to compare EPD across different breeds. A directly comparable evaluation provides producers with the ability to make better decisions, improve profitability, and ensure long-term success.

The collaborative effort of IGS and leveraging the largest pooled dataset in the beef industry produces the most robust and comparable EPD available. For example, a Weaning Weight EPD for a Simmental animal is directly comparable to a Weaning Weight EPD for a Red Angus or Limousin animal. Similarly, the Stayability EPD, or prediction of cow longevity, can be directly compared among breeds that participate in the IGS Multi-breed Genetic Evaluation.

The ability to directly compare EPD across multiple breeds simplifies the decision-making process in mating scenarios and aids in simplifying crossbreeding management programs.

Commercial Relevance and Opportunities

The IGS team is dedicated to the continued innovation in precision breeding tools for the betterment of the beef industry. In addition to the ability to handle data across multiple breeds, the genetic evaluation allows hybrid and crossbred data to flow in the system to be analyzed right alongside purebred data. **The ability to incorporate commercial data allows for an improved genetic evaluation system by accurately accounting for the impacts of heterosis and breed differences that exist in different production settings.**

The influx of commercial data into the evaluation increases the relevance and predictive ability of the IGS evaluation and further builds the massive database. The dedication to science-backed research and selection tool development empowers producers to make better, more profitable decisions and helps producers to do more with less.

The recently updated Feeder Profit Calculator is a free resource for producers to utilize to help know and share the profit potential of their feeder cattle. This tool allows producers to record their management practices and the genetic base of their bull battery to objectively determine profit potential. The Feeder Profit Calculator serves to better understand the value of genetic decisions and management practices that are implemented within an operation.

There is no doubt we are in tremendous times in the cattle industry with record high prices being witnessed across the country. The mating decisions made today will have an impact on an operation for years to come. While the cattle cycle ebbs and flows, the IGS Multi-breed Genetic Evaluation empowers producers with one set of unified, highly accurate genetic predictions to facilitate increased profit potential. **S**

