

GUEST opinion

You know that genetics set the base for profitability in all segments of the cattle industry. Earlier this year, Shawn Walter and Ron Hale of Professional Cattle Consultants summarized feedlot data showing what kind of cattle generate added dollars. And guess what? The high-growth, high-grading cattle were most profitable. Fortunately, both can be achieved in the same cattle through genetic selection.

Maybe you did not know how well correlated both growth and grade are to the actual profitability for each animal. A recent University of Illinois study illustrated this nicely. The profit per steer had a correlation value of +.46 with marbling score and +.63 with growth (average daily gain, ADG). Breaking down the pieces that go into profit per steer, ADG was also very well correlated to cost of gain (-.48) and feed conversion (-.64), while marbling score was near zero for these two factors.

What really gets exciting is that both marbling and growth are very heritable traits and, thus, through genetic focus on both, profitable cattle can be achieved. Equally important is that both traits can be selected for without sacrificing any de-

Did you know? Growth, grade correlated to profit

Table 1. Simple Correlations Among Traits

	Marbling Score	Average Daily Gain
Cost of Gain	+0.06	-.48
Profit/Steer	+0.46	+0.63
Feed Conversion	-.06	-.64

Source: Relationship among performance, carcass and feed efficiency characteristics and their ability to predict economic value in the feedlot. Retallick, et al, J Anim Sci, published online October 28, 2013.

gree of having functional cows (another topic for another day). Both traits have numerous DNA markers already identified, too, further enhancing the genetic selection potential. — **Larry Corah, Vice President, Certified Angus Beef LLC**



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