



different sires.

“Direct calving ease is better received and understood by commercial and seedstock producers alike,” says Northcutt. “Maternal calving ease is a tool to apply when fine tuning selection for replacement females.”

“It’s often overlooked, but producers should pay attention to maternal calving ease,” says Altenburg. “This is so important, as there is a lot of difference between bulls,” and that can impact future cattle lines, he says.

Altenburg says that sire evaluations can do a good job of describing the differences, and points out that with IRM Redbooks it’s easy to record the data necessary to produce them. Redbooks, produced by NCBA, are pocket-sized record books that contain more than 100 pages to

record calving activity, herd health, pasture usage and cattle inventory.

Education Crucial

Regardless of desired traits, education for producers is crucial, Weaber says. “With a large number of EPDs and indices available today, it’s getting harder and harder to make informed decisions,” he says. “We just need to remember to focus only on those traits that have economic importance to our operations.” He says that if you sell cattle at weaning weight, for instance, it makes little sense to be concerned with the carcass weight EPD.

“All of this can be overwhelming for new breeders who come into the business,” says Northcutt. “We have to continue to create educational avenues that assist producers in selecting the right tools for

developing their selection strategies.”

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Here are descriptions of calving ease scores, standardized by the Beef Improvement Federation:

- Calving Difficulty or Ease
- 1 – No difficulty, no assistance
- 2 – Minor difficulty, some assistance
- 3 – Major difficulty, usually mechanical assistance
- 4 – Caesarian section or other surgery
- 5 – Abnormal presentation

Safe Handling of Pesticides - Mixing

by Dr. Reeves Petroff, Extension Pesticide Education Specialist, Montana State University

Editor’s note: This information was edited to fit the space.

Spring is when farmers and their livestock return to the field, along with unwanted pests. Handling the products to control the unwanted invaders must be done with caution.

The first concern is safety. The chemicals can harm you, livestock, wildlife and even the field you’re working. Start by reading the label and always follow the label instructions. Know the first aid procedures.

Injuries are likely to occur when the chemicals are being mixed and haven’t been diluted. Protect your eyes with splash-proof goggles and never pour pesticides at eye level. Never lift any open pesticide container higher than your chest. Mix and pour concentrated pesticides no higher than waist level. A spill or splash could be disastrous.

- Do not work alone. Be sure that help is available nearby in case you get into trouble.
- Work only in a well-ventilated, well-lighted area.
- Mix and load on a concrete slab where spills can be contained. If no slab is available, use a catch basin — a container within a container — to prevent inadvertent spills. For example, a measuring jar can be placed inside a plastic tub. If the jar tips over, the spill is confined to the tub.

- Never mix or transfer pesticides near a well or water source.
- Never stir pesticides with your hands. Use a stir-stick.
- Never pour pesticide directly into a spray tank. Always mix and dilute the pesticide in a small container.
- Pour the pesticide into water. Never pour water into the pesticide.
- When pouring, keep your head well above and to one side of the spray tank opening. This will reduce the chance of your being splashed in the face.
- If pesticides are spilled or splashed on you, remove your clothing immediately and wash yourself thoroughly — within two minutes. Then wash your clothing.
- Stand with your back to the wind so that any fumes or dusts blow away from you.
- Make certain that all the equipment is functioning properly. Check hoses, fittings, valves and tanks on sprayer equipment for leaks or signs of failure. Do a quick daily inspection. Develop and run through an inspection list of sprayer equipment.
- Use all recommended protective clothing and equipment. Double-check that your respirator fits properly and that the kind of canister cartridge recommended on the product label is attached to it.