

## CONTEMPORARY GROUPS

### WHAT IS A CONTEMPORARY GROUP?

It is simply two or more individual animals that have had the same opportunity to perform. Individual animals need at least one other pen mate with which to compare.

Contemporary Groups are a cornerstone of your genetic calculations, resulting in EPDs on your animals. The data submitted for an animal such as BW, WW and YW has little value if it cannot be fairly compared to other animals that have had the same opportunity to perform. Therefore, getting your Contemporary Groups right, starting at new calf registration, is essential.

When animals are appropriately grouped with contemporaries in terms of similar **sex, age, management** and **environment**, then differences in performance are likely due to differences in genetic merit. Presented in EPDs these differences become a valuable extra tool when selecting sires and dams.

- \* CONTEMPORARY GROUPS are ESTABLISHED AT BIRTH on the original farm/ranch
- \* CONTEMPORARY GROUPS NEVER GET BIGGER, they can only get SMALLER, therefore, animals cannot be added later to any Contemporary Group.

### COMPONENTS of a CONTEMPORARY GROUP:

- \* SEX - bulls and heifers are put in separate Contemporary Groups.
  - at calf registration, bulls and steers are together; at weaning and yearling dates they are separated into different Contemporary Groups if a male is recorded as a steer.
  - **Digital Beef does this for you** when you enter the calf's sex
- \* AGE - calves go into 90-day periods starting with the 1st calf born
  - eg; if the 1st calf is born January 1st, that is the beginning of Contemporary Group 1 which includes all calves born until March 31st; Contemporary Group 2 starts with April 1st born calves.
  - **Digital Beef does this for you** when you enter the calf's DOB
- \* MANAGEMENT - this component can be a factor if a group of calves, weanlings or yearlings gets creep, show or sale feed and another group does not.
  - **Digital Beef DOES NOT do this for you**, therefore, you must record the differences and then Digital Beef will create separate Contemporary Groups based on the codes input.
  - NOTE: different management (eg; feeding) of the dams does not constitute a different management group for their calves.
- \* ENVIRONMENT - similar to Management, this factor refers to significant differences in location that can affect performance, eg; animals on different pastures which have distinctly better or worse feed quality/quantity such that it would affect performance.
  - like Management, at time of recording weaning and/or yearling data, the breeder must decide **if a different Environment code applies; if so, Digital Beef will create different Contemporary Groups** from those codes.

### OTHER CONTEMPORARY GROUP FACTORS:

- \* Embryo Calves are put into separate Contemporary Groups. ie; separate from natural and AI service calves. **Digital Beef does this for you** when you record a birth as ET.
- \* Multiple birth calves (twins) are put into separate Contemporary Groups. Digital Beef does this for you when you record the calf's birth as a multiple.
- \* "ONE OFF" calves such as a very premature born calf (very low birth weight) or a very sickly calf that couldn't thrive will be put in separate Contemporary Groups when those conditions are added by the breeder at time of registration.
- \* Individuals purchased and brought into your herd as weanlings or yearlings can never be contemporaries of your own home raised calves; therefore, they will go into their own Contemporary Group.

**IMPORTANT TIP: Do not assign different management or environment codes if there really is no discernible difference. Simply leave those fields blank.**

\*\*\*\*\*SIMPLE STEPS for GETTING it RIGHT\*\*\*\*\*

- 1) Submit all calf registrations at once OR in groups of calves born in 90-day periods starting January 1st.
  - \* Do Not submit registrations at random
  - \* Do Not submit older calves before younger calves
  
- 2) A handy feature of the Digital Beef system is the ability to RECORD calf registrations at any time, individually as they are born if you wish, without SUBMITTING the registration until a later date when all are complete. This feature is very convenient for the breeder and at the same time, preserves the integrity of establishing correct Contemporary Groups.
  
- 3) Similar to submitting calf registrations, DO NOT submit random weaning or yearling data; you may wish to RECORD the data in the system at anytime as your animals are weighed, but wait and SUBMIT all data at once when done.
  
- 4) Record and Submit all data on all animals; DO NOT leave out data on animals you plan to cull or you feel are inferior; their data helps make all the data on your other animals MORE accurate, not LESS accurate.

PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL THE REGISTRY OFFICE IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR NEED ASSISTANCE "TO GET IT RIGHT".

Two excellent, very readable articles are available [here](#) about Contemporary Groups, written by Bob Weaber, Ph.D, Associate Professor and Cow-Calf Extension Specialist at Kansas City University. They were originally prepared for the Canadian and US Limousin associations. Please take the time to read them as they are enormously helpful in further explaining the critical importance of Contemporary Groups.