IGS AND THE PURSUIT OF BETTER CATTLE

*A global collaboration of major beef breed associations seeks to empower commercial cattlemen with genetic insight and more powerful tools for better breeding decisions.*

Bozeman, MT — Data is driving change in nearly all sectors of agriculture, and the beef industry is no exception.

Modern-day ranching requires more information to produce better animals, and International Genetic Solutions is propelling the effort across multiple breeds. The aim is to provide more accurate selection tools that allow for head-to-head comparisons and maximum profitability — regardless of breed.

“Tying all of that information together adds a lot of value to commercial and seedstock producers because it provides a set of EPDs that are comparable across breeds without doing a bunch of extra math to figure out how they compare,” says Bob Weaber, Kansas State University Extension Specialist.

“It’s easy to make crossbreeding decisions where we’re seeking out specific genetic traits and inputs for our production system. We don’t have to spend a lot of time trying to figure out how does breed A compare to breed B? It’s all laid out and they’re on the same base and scale.”

International Genetic Solutions, or IGS, is a collaborative effort between numerous beef breed associations from the US, Canada, and Australia, resulting in the largest and only major multi-breed cattle evaluation system. With decades of data and nearly 18 million animals in the database, IGS Director of Commercial and Industry Relations Chip Kemp says IGS is helping producers make more powerful breeding decisions than ever before.

“You can directly compare a yearling weight from a Simmental to a Red Angus to a Limousin. You can directly compare the stayability or the cow longevity from a Balancer to Angus in the system to a SimAngus™,” he says. “It empowers that commercial client to get past all of the clutter to make smarter, wiser, more profit-focused decisions.”

IGS uses a single-step genetic evaluation model that incorporates genomic and phenotypic information on purebred and composite animals. The collaboration allows participating breed associations to gather and analyze data on traits that are difficult to measure but economically important.
“We’re able to calculate EPDs on those cattle, and these cattle bring the power of heterosis and crossbreeding to the commercial cattleman as far as increased performance in their cow herds, increased growth, and productivity in their calf crop,” says Tom Strahm, Commercial Marketing Director of the American Gelbvieh Association, one of many IGS collaborators.

IGS also helps cattle producers verify the value of feeder calves, weighing good management practices alongside genetic merit through free tools like the Feeder Profit Calculator. The goal: Better returns on genetic investments.

“The greatest thing it’s brought is just a better system for cattle evaluations and the collaborative effort of people working together through different breed associations. When you’ve got this many cattle in the evaluation, what you get is crossbred cattle evaluations that the commercial cattleman can use,” says Mark Anderson, North American Limousin Foundation executive director. “So in the race to make the better kind of cattle, the science we’re using today, I think it’s on the forefront and getting really exciting.”

More information about IGS or the IGS Feeder Profit Calculator can be found at internationalgeneticsolutions.com.

Video package available at:

International Genetic Solutions (IGS) is an unprecedented collaboration between progressive breed associations across the US and Canada that are committed to enhancing beef industry profitability. The collaboration encompasses education, technological advancement and genetic evaluation. Through collaboration, IGS has become the largest beef cattle evaluation in the world.