

## Red Angus Contemporary Grouping and Management Codes

Not only is accurate and complete reporting important for the most reliable EPDs, but how you submit that data to ensure animals are being compared accurately is equally important. The concept of a contemporary group within a genetic evaluation is to compare animals that had an equal opportunity to perform within the same environment. If animals weren't given equal opportunity, (i.e., preferential treatment) the comparisons in performance that are made within the genetic evaluation become less precise. This article will explain how contemporary groups are formed to help members understand the most accurate way to submit calf crop data and explain what data REDSPro uses to split out contemporary groups.

Members are responsible for indicating differences in management experienced among a group of animals. This could include things such as the segregation of younger dams before calving, putting a group of pairs on better pasture than others or splitting heifers from bulls at weaning. This and other differences in management should be indicated as accurately as possible when submitting calf data.

There are several opportunities for members to form differences in management, but understanding how to enter these codes and what the database looks at is vital to accurate contemporary grouping. The first and most important factor to keep animals in the same group is to submit all calf registrations for the season in the same job in REDSPro. Animals submitted in different jobs cannot group together at birth or from there forward. If multiple accounts run cattle together or more than one job is submitted for registrations, please contact Fallon Flick and she can help make corrections to this default grouping. All animals of all sexes should be registered in the same job, if possible.

Another parameter that is used for forming groups is the *Contmp Brdr* field. This field is useful for operations that have multiple member account numbers in one herd. If there are multiple accounts, the best practice is to put the main account number in the *Contmp Brdr* field. Doing this does not automatically bring all of the animals together, since separate jobs would still have to be submitted for registrations. However, it makes identifying the animals that should be grouped together much easier.

The next tool used to form groups is the *Brth Grp* field. Similarly, for weaning and yearling, there are group parameters as well (*Wean Grp* and *Year Grp*). The *Brth Grp* field should be used to distinguish differences in groups of dams during and through calving. Often, members manage first calf heifers differently. If that's the case, their calves should then receive a different *Brth Grp* code than the others. If all of your bred females are managed and calve together, then give all calves the same code, such as '1'. The same applies for the *Wean Grp* and *Year Grp*. Any calves that were not managed in the same way as other animals in the herd should receive a separate indication in the *Wean Grp* and/or *Year Grp* field. Some examples of this may be sending heifers to pasture and bulls to the feedlot at weaning or holding animals in different pens through yearling. These fields are the main parameters that each member can use to help more accurately reflect management differences. These can also be used to remove individual animals from a larger group.

Examples of this would be if an animal is sick and has to be individually treated or if an animal is injured to the point that it affects the animal's performance. Using numerical codes is best for all of these fields.

While grouping parameters are the main way for members to accurately report data, there are other data submission points that the evaluation uses to form a contemporary group. The most obvious example is the sex of the animal. Animals of different sex are automatically grouped differently when calf data is submitted and a member should not incorporate sex only into the group codes mentioned above. Additionally, animals that are a result of an ET mating are not grouped with animals that are a result of A.I. or natural mating. The *Calf Year* field is important for members that have calving seasons that stretch into a new calendar year. Animals born at the end of one year that are considered to be in the next calf year must have the *Calf Year* field updated. Other entry points that will result in animals being split out include twin animals, a non-specific date of birth, feed codes listed at weaning, different weight or scan dates and animals that do not receive weight records at all.

It's important to remember that contemporary groups will never increase in size. For animals to be grouped together at later ages, they must be part of the same group at birth. If an animal experiences a different environment at a younger age, this could affect its performance at older ages, so it's important to be diligent in separating these animals.

Another way to think about contemporary grouping is to start with your main calf group, then identify animals that should be removed from that group. For example, if an animal was fostered, injured or shown, that animal should not be a member of the main contemporary group. The easiest way for these animals to be separated out is through the *Brth*, *Wean* or *Year* group parameter, depending on when the animal needs to be separated from the main group. A *ContmpGrp\_Summary* report under Reports/Downloads in REDSPro can be used to see data that goes into forming contemporary groups.

#### A brief guide to Contemporary Grouping in RAAA

1. Register all animals in the same job.
2. Use *Brth*, *Wean* and *Year Grp* fields to indicate different management decisions.
3. Remove animals that have become sick or injured by giving them a unique group code.
4. Animals must group at birth to group at weaning and must group at weaning to group at yearling.
5. Sex, weight date, mating type and feed code differences automatically separate animals and do not need to be considered in your *Brth*, *Wean* or *Year Grp* codes.
6. Calves weighed and scanned outside the appropriate age window will group differently. Check each age parameter and use multiple weight dates if necessary.
7. Calves that receive special treatment should be in their own contemporary group.
8. The goal is to maintain contemporary group size as large, but as accurately as possible.
9. Never purposely form contemporary groups with only one sire represented.
10. There is considerable variability in resources among pastures even if they are in close proximity to each other.
11. If animals will be separated at older ages, collect phenotypes on those animals before they are separated.

Please contact the RAAA office if you have any questions about contemporary group designations.