

# Live Carcass Ultrasound - The Preparation & The Payoff

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Just like a lot of things in the livestock industry, there is lots of information producers should know before ultrasounding their cattle. The following is a list of things you should know while making your decision and things to prepare before the technician arrives.

- A good squeeze chute is a must for proper restraint of the animal to receive the best quality image possible. A squeeze chute also helps to save time!
- A current weight is needed. It is best if the weight is taken the day of scanning, although weights seven days before or seven days after the scan date are accepted. It's important to keep in mind that taking weights after the scan session will prolong the length of time to receive your results.
- To receive CUP (Centralized Ultrasound Processing) data, the cattle must be clipped in the areas that are scanned. This is to ensure the highest quality image possible. Hair, dirt, and foreign debris have a negative impact on the image and make a noticeable difference in image interpretation. We like to call the clip marks "The Mark of Excellence." Promote these clip marks as a positive thing at your sale and to your buyers.
- "Barnsheets" must be obtained from your breed association prior to the scan session.
- It is also a good idea to know the appropriate age window for scanning bulls and heifers in your respective breed. Each association has a guideline set as to how old your cattle should be when ultrasounded.

Once the images are taken, they are sent to the CUP Lab where they are interpreted a minimum of two times by experienced technicians. The CUP Lab (Walter & Associates, LLC) averages a 48-hour turn around, even in the busy season. The data is then forwarded to the appropriate breed association for them to compile into National Cattle Evaluation programs.

The measurements you receive include: Ribeye Area (sq."), Rump Fat Thickness, Rib Fat Thickness, and % Intramuscular Fat.

It is important to understand the many benefits you receive from carcass ultrasound. You have heritable data that can be a huge asset when culling cows or bulls and data that is of major importance to many bull and heifer buyers. More and more commercial and purebred breeders understand carcass ultrasound data and realize its usefulness as a selection tool for buying, just like many other EPD's. Whether marketing your cattle on the grid system or simply selling your cattle privately, the benefits are endless and sought-after by many facets of the industry including feedlots and packing plants. Many times there can even be a premium offered for cattle with this data.

There aren't many technicians out there who can guarantee an instant increase in dollar-value of your cattle. Understanding the data and knowing how to use it for the benefit of your operation is the most important thing about it. It can take years of ultrasounding to see results and progress.

Every year I continue to hear more producers, purebred and commercial alike, say "I don't buy bulls without carcass data anymore." Every time I hear this, all I can think of are the improvements this data is making in beef quality and beef genetics throughout all breeds country-wide.