

# GETTING STARTED WITH ULTRASOUND



## *Breeder Perspectives*

By Elizabeth Tovar

As ABBA continues to encourage carcass ultrasound data collection, many breeders may be willing, but wonder if they are ready or able to participate. The American Brahman Review visits with several ABBA members and Brahman breeders who describe their experiences starting a carcass ultrasound program.

## MAKING THE COMMITMENT

The first step in utilizing ultrasound is to make the commitment to do it, says John Locke, chairman of the ABBA's Research and Breed Improvement Committee, and member of J.D. Hudgins, Inc., in Hungerford, Texas.

"A breeder may think they know how their animals perform carcass wise, or how fat they are, or how much muscle they have," says Locke. "But, until you actually look at the scan data or the harvest data, you're just guessing."

By participating in the ultrasound program, breeders get a copy of the scan data from their animals, which allows them to see where their cattle are in terms of carcass merit, and gives them a benchmark to make improvement if necessary.

Chris Shivers, executive vice president of the American Brahman Breeders Association encourages breeders to join the ultrasound movement.

"The ABBA encourages breeders to utilize all available tools to improve their cattle, and ultimately the Brahman breed," says Shivers. "One of the most efficient tools available is the use of real time ultrasound for carcass traits."

Shivers adds that ultrasound technology has been used for more than 20 years, and helps identify the future carcass traits of Brahman cattle at an early age.

## CONDUCT A QUICK HERD INVENTORY

Once you've made the commitment, the next step is to conduct a quick inventory to determine what animals you have in your herd that qualify for ultrasound. A breeder should include animals that meet the following criteria:

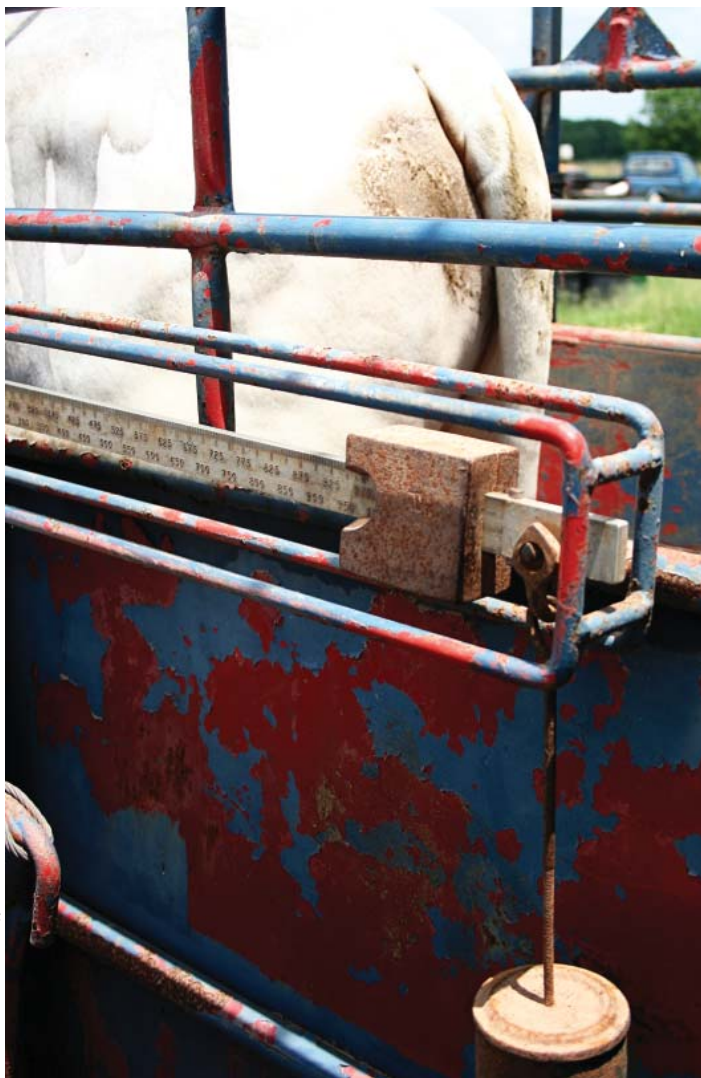
- Animals must be on file at ABBA. This means they must either be registered, or have been submitted for "performance only" reporting.
- Animals must be between 12 and 16 months of age.

Once you have this animal count, you can begin the process of finding and booking a technician.

## BOOKING YOUR TECHNICIAN

In order for your data to be recognized by ABBA, the ultrasound images must be collected by a technician who is approved by the Ultrasound Guidelines Council.

"If you are looking for a technician, the best place to start is at [www.ultrasoundbeef.com](http://www.ultrasoundbeef.com)," recommends Shivers. "This council is governed by the U.S. Beef Breeds Council, of which ABBA is a member. This insures that the data collected from ultrasounding



*All cattle in the ultrasound contemporary group should be weighed either on the day of the test, or within 7 days.*

Brahman cattle is accurate."

Currently there are approximately 30 technicians certified by UCG located throughout the south. Some technicians are able to interpret the data they collect themselves, if they are certified by the UCG as a Certified Lab Technician. If the technician is not certified to interpret data, they will submit the images to an UCG Approved Lab, which will interpret the information and submit it to ABBA.

Breeders should discuss with the potential technician the number of head to be scanned, the facilities available, and how much the technician charges per head. Pricing varies based on the technician, amount of travel required, number of head scanned, and other factors.

"When we began searching for a technician, the first person we called charged \$18 per head, because they sent the images to be analyzed at a lab," says Brandon Cutrer, an ABBA member from V8 Ranch in Texas. "The next technician charged \$12 per head, because he was able to interpret the data himself, so that saved us nearly \$500."

Additionally, some technicians may give discount rates for larger groups of cattle, and it may be beneficial for ABBA members to cooperate with other Brahman breeders in their area to gather larger groups of cattle, and split costs.

## PREPARING FACILITIES FOR THE ULTRASOUND

Jason Smith of Smith Brahman in Louisiana has found they are best prepared for the ultrasound day if they begin planning approximately one week before the technician is scheduled to arrive.

"We began ultrasounding this year, and once we decided to do it, it was easy to get organized," says Smith. "Most of our facilities were already equipped to do the ultrasound, so we just cleaned up around the area and we were ready to go."

Breeders should survey their working area and make sure they are adequately prepared with the appropriate facilities. ABBA recommends the following equipment and facilities to best handle the ultrasounding procedure:

*A working chute* – The breeder should provide a working chute that can be squeezed on the side. This can either be a squeeze chute, or something as simple as a gate that can be adjusted to restrain the animals. The facility should allow for the animal to be restrained

and immobile, so the technician can collect the highest quality image without the animal moving excessively. Under best circumstances, the chute area should be covered, blocking direct sunlight and providing shelter from possible weather conditions.

**Electricity** – The technician will need access to an electrical outlet with a working, grounded power signal of 110V. The technician will need to plug in his ultrasound equipment as well as a computer.

**A scale** – The ABBA requires that all animals to be ultrasounded be weighed either on the date of the ultrasound test, or within 7 days of being scanned. This information is used to develop the performance data used by the association and to calculate ratios within the contemporary group.

### PROVIDING INFORMATION TO THE TECHNICIAN

On the day of the ultrasound, the breeder needs to provide the technician with information to match the images with the individual animals. The ABBA provides an ultrasound barn sheet that should be completed and given to the technician, and ultimately reported to the ABBA. The breeder will need to provide the following information on the barn sheet:

- Brand #
- Birthdate
- Weight
- Test Type
- Diet
- Registration #
- Sire & Dam (either ID or ABBA #)
- Group Code
- Sex

“It took us about one full day to assemble our records to prepare for ultrasound,” says Cutrer. “We did 60 head of yearling bulls, in 3 locations. The most time consuming part was gathering the list of bulls, then looking up their registration numbers and information.”

Cutrer used the ABBA web site to help find out most of the information needed for the barn sheet.

“I like using the ABBA online search. I found it easier to just search for the animals online and then write down their information from the ABBA web site on to the barn sheet,” adds Cutrer.

One common request at the ABBA office is for a definition of *group code*, *test type*, and *diet*, says Shivers.

“*Group code* is simply for breeder use to differentiate animals who were handled differently,” advises Shivers. “For example, show animals who live at a showbarn and get full feed might be classified as group 1, where sale bulls on a grass pasture might be classified as group 2.”

*Test type* refers to where the testing occurs, adds Shivers. “Animals living on the ranch would be classified as a ranch test, whereas animals at a bull test station would be classified as a central test, or animals at a feedlot would be classified as feedlot tests.”

Finally, the breeder should classify the diet type, based on four codes. Zero is given for unknown diets, a 1 is for 0% concentrate, 2 is for less than 50% concentrate, and 3 is for more than 50% concentrate. For example, a bull on show feed would be classified as a diet code 3, but a bull on pasture who is fed Purina

### American Brahman Breeders Association Ultrasound Barn Sheet

3003 South Loop West Suite, 520 - Houston, TX 77054 713-349-0854  
www.brahman.org cshivers@brahman.org

<b>Technician Information</b>					<b>Technology (circle):</b> <input checked="" type="radio"/> New Aloka <input type="radio"/> Old Aloka <input type="radio"/> Classic <input type="radio"/> Other _____								
Name: <u>Certified UCG Technician</u>					Frame Grabber (circle) <input type="radio"/> CX100 <input type="radio"/> PXC200 <input type="radio"/> Other _____								
<b>Breeder Information</b>					<b>Scan Session Information</b>								
Name/Contact: <u>Brahman Beef Producer</u>					Address: <u>123 Brahman Rd.</u>								
Association(s): <u>ABBA</u>					City, State & Zip: <u>Houston, TX 12345</u>								
Member Number(s): <u>456123</u>					Phone Number: <u>555-1212</u>								
Email address: _____					Fax Number: _____								
					Hair Coat less than 1/2"? (circle): <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No								
<b>**ALL DUPLICATE BRANDS MUST BE CLEARLY DEFINED**</b>													
<b>Comments:</b>													
Brand Number	Reg. Number	Birthdate	Dam ID	Dam Reg #	Sire ID	Sire Reg. #	Weight	Weight Date	Group Code	Test Type	Sex	Diet	Remarks
1	1/9	123456	4/15/09	123/4	555/5		1010	7/1	1	R	Bull	2	
2	2/9	123457	4/18/09	456/7	555/5		975						
3	3/9	123458	4/18/09	89/0	555/5		1026						
4	4/9	123459	4/22/09	987	555/5		1200						
5	5/9	123460	4/23/09	654	555/5		973						
6	6/9	123461	4/24/09	321/0	555/5		1113						
7	7/9	123462	5/1/09	135/7	555/5		1045						
8	8/9	123463	5/2/09	246/8	555/5		995						
9	13/9	123464	5/9/09	579	555/5		1065						
10	21/9	123465	6/1/09	864	555/5		1075						
11													
12													
13													
14													
15													

The breeder can complete the majority of the ABBA Ultrasound Barn sheet prior to the day of the test, such as the brand number, birthdate, registration number, sire and dam, and codes. Then on the test day, record the weights and have the technician sign the form.

Accuracy would be classified as 2. Bulls strictly on grass would be classified as code 1.

### THE DAY OF THE TEST

The breeder should be prepared for the technician to arrive, including having all of the animals gathered at a central location and ready to begin. It is recommended to have the cattle separated into small groups for ease of working.

Once the technician arrives, he or she will need a few minutes to assess your facilities and set up the equipment. When the technician is ready, the excitement begins.

Based on your facilities and the number of head to be scanned, ABBA members should be prepared with enough labor to provide a smooth process.

“When we did our ultrasound, we had almost an assembly line of people to make the process go quickly and smoothly,” describes Locke.

“One person moved up the bulls, another worked the chute and



THE TECHNICIAN WILL SCAN THE ANIMAL OVER THE RUMP TO MEASURE RUMP FAT. HE WILL ALSO SCAN THE RIB AREA FOR MARBLING, RIB FAT, AND RIBEYE AREA.

assisted the technician, and then a third person weighed the bulls. We also had a person help track of the paperwork and write down the weights.”

As the technician works, they will be collecting the information that is required by ABBA: rib fat thickness, ribeye area, and percent IMF (marbling or intramuscular fat).

The technician will scan the animal at two locations: over the hip, and over the rib. As he measures over the hip, he is collecting

# OKLAHOMA *Brahmans*



To be added on this page, call  
979-532-0121 or e-mail  
liz@brahmanreview.com

### BUTLER POLLED BRAHMANS

P.O. Box 871  
Hugo, Ok. 74743  
Cell 903-466-6243  
Home 580-326-2521

### RICH CATTLE COMPANY

Bob Rich  
356450 E 1010 Rd  
Prague, OK 74864  
405-567-3798  
Cell: 405-659-6844  
jrichbrahmans@yahoo.com

rump fat data. As they measure over the ribs, they collect rib fat, ribeye area, and marbling data.

The technician will squirt a small amount of lubricant on the animals hide to help collect the image. For haired cattle, the breeder must shear the animals hair to ¼ inch, in order to allow the technician to get as close to the skin as possible. Lucky for Brahman breeders, shearing is not necessary since the cattle are naturally short haired.

Once the process begins, the time to collect the data can vary, but ranges from 1 to 10 minutes per animal.

“It took us about 10 minutes per calf, from start to finish, by the time we got one in the chute, scanned, weighed, and got the next calf in” says Smith.

“We weren’t trying to break any speed records, since this was our first time. We were very interested in seeing the data and learning about the process as we did the ultrasounding.”

### AFTER THE TEST

After the technician completes the scanning, then the breeder begins the waiting game until their data can be analyzed and reported. This process may take anywhere from a couple of days to a few weeks, depending on the technician and the work log at the ultrasound lab.

When the data is analyzed, the breeder will receive information including individual measurements as well as ratios within contemporary groups. This information is also reported to ABBA who uses the information to build the database which will eventually lead to better availability of carcass EPDs.

“When you participate in the ABBA Ultrasound program, your cattle’s results are recorded in that animal’s performance file,” explains Shivers.

More data is needed to help the ABBA build its database in an effort to improve carcass EPDs, Shivers adds.

“When we have 5,000 ultrasound records on file, the ABBA will be able to incorporate the data into carcass EPDs for the traits measured - ribeye area, back fat, and marbling.”

### BREEDERS THOUGHTS

All the breeders interviewed agreed that the entire ultrasound process was well worth the time and resources invested.

“We’re definitely going to continue doing ultrasound,” says Smith. “The more information we can collect, the better.”

Cutrer agrees, “We just did our spring yearling bulls in June, and we plan on doing the ranch’s fall born bulls later this year. This give us more information to show our commercial bull buyers what Brahman cattle can do.”

Locke encourages others to consider ultrasounding, to help build the database. He wholeheartedly believes in this program.

“It’s going to be great when we reach the threshold of having enough cattle in the ABBA ultrasound database to integrate that into carcass EPDs,” he says. “We plan on doing our bulls twice a year, and find that more and more commercial buyers are asking for the data.”

For more information on ultrasounding, visit [brahman.org](http://brahman.org) and download a copy of the ABBA Ultrasound Evaluation Guidelines and ABBA Ultrasound Barn Sheet. Getting started with ultrasound is easier than many realize and the value of the information is priceless. ©TABR

#### 1. BAR CRESCENT D RANCH

[www.barcrescentd.com](http://www.barcrescentd.com)  
P. O. Box 432  
Wauchula, FL 33873  
863-773-0809

#### 2. IS RANCH

[www.isranchtheredteam.com](http://www.isranchtheredteam.com)  
11559 SE CR 337  
Trenton, FL 32693  
Mark Bishop: 352-317-1821  
Larry Studsill: 352-538-3985  
Briana Bishop: 352-317-0533

#### 3. L2 RANCH

Adrian Land Family  
5860 SE CR 500  
Branford, FL 32008  
386-590-2400

#### 4. MARCUS SHACKELFORD

P. O. Box 935  
Wauchula, FL 33873  
863-773-4616  
Marcus Cell: 836-781-9572

#### 5. SOUTHERN CATTLE COMPANY

4226 N. Hwy 231  
Marianna, FL 32446  
850-352-2020

#### 6. MORENO FIRMS

[www.morenofirms.com](http://www.morenofirms.com)  
P.O. Box 651142  
Miami, FL 33265

# BRAHMAN

ARE GREAT IN THE

