



High and Low Variation in a Contemporary Group or Herd

Occasionally, animals in a contemporary group or even in a herd have either very low variation or very high variation in their records. In other words, they all have very similar 400-Day Weights, for example, or indeed have 400-Day weights that are spread across a wide range.

If nothing were done about this, animals from the most variable herds would tend to get the highest EBVs. On the other hand, if the records were adjusted so that all herds have the same range of performance (albeit different averages) there is a risk of downgrading some animals that really are genetically superior. To account for it, the BLUP analysis reaches a compromise:

- The variation in each herd is scaled towards an overall average range
- But the amount of scaling that goes on depends on the size of the contemporary groups which animals belong to

Small groups with extremely high or low variation get scaled down or up more than big groups because there is a much higher risk that extreme variation in a small group is due to chance or the result of accidental differences in management.

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