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Message from the Board

By John L. Montgomery, Jr., Director Region C

Characteristics of a "Successful" Red Angus Breeder

There have been several articles in recent Ag related throw-away journals about the various characteristics of a cowboy. I will add my two cents worth to this discussion, and offer a few characteristics that a "successful" Red Angus breeder might have.

First we may try to define success. One may consult the dictionary, would it be: a) achievement of desired aim, b) attainment of fame, wealth, or power, c) something that turns out well, or d) someone who has significant achievements? Take your pick or take all of them. I have a personal definition of success for what it's worth: "A successful person is one that is doing what he/she wants to do, when he/she wants to do it." Retired UCLA coach John Wooden has a good one: "Success is peace of mind that is the direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming." I imagine that each of us has their own idea of what success is for them.

Not to get bogged down at this point, let's go on and list a few possible characteristics:

1. Arguably, the most important quality may be DESIRE. As another of my favorite heroes, Penn State football coach Joe Paterno, now pushing 80 years and still striving, has been known to say: "Ya gotta wanna". Purebred cattle breeding is difficult and not hugely financially rewarding at best. Those that persist and succeed in this field love what they are doing and keep doing it.

2. Knowledge and management capability. This may be one of the hardest parts of the puzzle to achieve. Most people on the outside do not realize

that being a farmer or rancher is complex and difficult; not for the uneducated, unsophisticated or uninformed. You must either be capable of successfully managing a purebred operation yourself, or be able to hire someone to do it. Finding good management personnel or even competent assistants is a problem that brings up discussions about work ethics, education, competition, and declining rural populations that have had "farm experience", etc.

3. Stable financial situation. This has got to rank high on the list. Breeding cattle is a long term business. The bovine generation interval of four years requires that one not only has a lot of patience, but also must have significant financial backing. And, I might add, financial backing that won't go away when things get tough. I've heard for a long time that the average lifespan of a purebred, shall we say, "livestock endeavor" is six to seven years; not even two generation intervals. It is nearly impossible to start from scratch anymore, especially with skyrocketing land prices and overhead. I have always admired those who have found success in the cattle business without a large inheritance or another career. I wanted to be a cowman at age 18, but instead chose a career in medicine for my sustenance. I wisely decided I wasn't smart or talented enough to make it in the purebred business alone.

4. Let's mention some less tangible qualities, starting with probably the most important. Pure, absolute, and unquestionable INTEGRITY. Purebred cattle business and for that matter, any business, is totally and irrevocably based on integrity. Oh yes, there is DNA testing and data filters and all

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Association Commentary

by Dr. Bob Hough, Executive Secretary

Why Your Next Bull Should be a Red Angus

As a commercial cow/calf producer, the decisions you make as to what herd sires to purchase will have a large impact on your business. Genetics touch every aspect of your enterprise - the number of animals that can be marketed, the relative value of these animals, and the factory that will produce them. Ultimately, the genetics you choose will also impact the product that will be bought by the consumer; something we must all take responsibility for. With this in mind, proper sire selection cannot be overemphasized.

We believe that Red Angus bulls offer commercial producers, and our industry, a unique package that makes them worthy of consideration by all operations. As more and more people make the decision to add Red Angus, we rarely see them move away from the breed. Repeat customers are as fine a tribute to this breed as I can think of.

Why are so many cow/calf operations switching to and then staying with Red Angus? The answer is simple. Red Angus are versatile cattle that make excellent mothers which produce marketable feeder

calves that can be fed and converted into high quality beef. The added bonus is that Red Angus are the best objectively described cattle in the industry and are backed by outstanding service.

Red Angus has been the clear leader in the objective description of cattle. We led when our founders decided to require performance records as a criterion for registration and continue today with THR and the FCCP. Service after the sale is another area that distinguishes Red Angus from most other breeds. The Red Angus Commercial Marketing Program offers a full range of services to help add value throughout the marketing chain.

Purchasing your next herd sire(s) is a serious business. The decisions you make this spring will affect your operation for years to come. We are proud of Red Angus - the breed and the breeders who build them. We hope that we can earn your business, and I would like to thank all those people in advance that will put their trust in Red Angus through the purchase of bulls this spring.



Introducing Ben Spitzer, RAAA Communications/ Member Services Director

I have had a focus on the beef industry from a young age. I grew up near a little town called

Fair Play in Upstate South Carolina. My family has a diversified operation featuring Brangus cattle and broiler chickens along with consulting in several herds in the Southeast. I was involved in 4-H and FFA, as well as the International Junior Brangus Breeders Association throughout my youth.

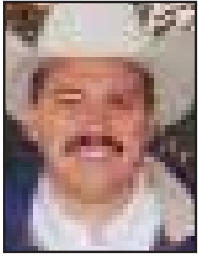
I graduated from Okalahoma State University in May 2004 with a degree in Animal Science with a production emphasis. I then attended Colorado State University to further my education in their Integrated Resource Management masters program and will graduate this spring. As part of that program, I interned here at the Red Angus Association this past summer.

As the Communications/Member

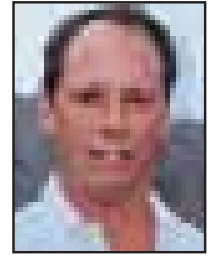
Services Director, my responsibilities will include promotion of the breed through national, regional and state media and organizations as well as state and regional affiliate associations. I will also administer the Coop Advertising program. I hope to expand the use of this program in each affiliate and increase our presence among the major cow-calf states. In addition, I will be traveling to various field days, consignment sales, bull sales, and industry events promoting the Red Angus breed.

Until I had the chance to read [The History of Red Angus](#) written by Dr. Hough last year, I did not realize what a history of performance and commercial industry focus this breed has had for the past 50 years. I share this same focus and I believe in the purpose and direction of the Red Angus breed. I am excited to be working for such an Association.

While I have gotten acquainted with some of you, there are still many of you that I have not had the chance to meet yet. I look forward to getting to know everyone. If I can be of any assistance, please let me know.



Marketing Update



by Blake Angell, Commercial Marketing Director and Greg Comstock, RAAA Marketing Programs Coordinator

Reaching Bull Buyers

By the time this Bull Buyers' Edition of ARA Magazine is in your Mailbox, the first 2006 Red Angus bull sale will only be six weeks away. Just in case you've overlooked anything in your pre-sale preparations, here are some services available that you might want to consider.

Mailing Lists

No catalog is any better than the mailing list used to get it in the hands of potential customers. RAAA can provide help in this area at a very reasonable price, and may be targeted through sorting by state or zip code. To utilize this service just e-mail RAAA office manager, Judy Edwards at judy@redangus.org.

Buyer Education

The Red Angus bulls you'll offer this Spring come complete with Red Angus genetic and Marketing Programs. Make sure your buyers realize these added bonuses are included by using Red Angus sale catalog inserts. These sale catalog inserts are camera ready PDFs and available free of charge. Simply choose as many of the following layouts as you'd like to include:

- One Page "Ranchers' Guide to EPDs" (B&W only - see example at right)
- One Page Red Angus Feeder Calf Certification Program (B&W or full color)
- One Page ProCow - Red Angus Commercial Female Marketing Program (B&W or full color)
- One Page combining FCCP & ProCow for when you have less space available (B&W or full color)

To acquire these pages, simply contact any of the following:

Greg Comstock, Marketing Programs Coordinator at greg@redangus.org
Kevin LeMaster, Advertising Director at kevin@redangus.org
Ben Spitzer, Communications/Member Services Director at ben@redangus.org

Predicting Profit...



...The Ranchers Guide to EPDs

Completely Described Beef Production: Reproduction • Growth Carcass • Maintenance

Profit starts at Reproduction! Research has shown that reproduction has four to ten times the economic impact of carcass traits. Yet, Red Angus is the only breed that completely describes cow herd reproduction from birth through profitable lifespan. Red Angus reproductive EPDs are expressed as percent probability, meaning the higher the EPD, the more likely the desired observation.

Profitable reproduction can be boiled down to success in these four Economically Relevant Traits:

Calving Ease Direct (CED): The expected progeny difference of calves being born unassisted from two year-old heifers. The Red Angus CED model accounts for contemporary group birth weight differences and calving ease scores.

Heifer Pregnancy (HPG): The expected progeny difference of heifers conceiving to calve at two years of age.

Calving Ease Total Maternal (CETM): The expected progeny difference of a given animal's daughters calving unassisted at two years of age.

Stayability (STAY): The expected progeny difference of a bull's daughters remaining in the herd until at least six years of age. Females that don't stay in the herd that long are losing money, and they also contribute to a higher rate of replacement females that the rancher can't cash crop.

Cows Eat Money! That's why Red Angus published the Mature Cow Maintenance Energy EPD (ME EPD), becoming the first beef breed to evaluate the expense side of the rancher's profit equation. Here are the facts:
• ME predicts differences in maintenance energy requirements of mature daughters of a bull.
• Maintenance energy requirements are directly related to feed cost - often producers' largest single expense.
• The lower the ME EPD, the less feed daughters require to maintain body condition.
• ME can be used to ensure environmental fit, and to estimate additional feed required by increased growth & milk.

EPDs (Expected Progeny Differences) are the most powerful selection tool the beef industry has ever had. The use of EPDs has converted selecting range bulls from an art form to a science, better preparing cow/calf producers to make genetic decisions which may ultimately improve their profitability.

Better Selection Tools Make Better Bulls
As the 2005 Bull Sale Season approaches, Red Angus remains the only major beef breed with mandatory Total Herd Reporting (THR), which requires the annual production of each cow and the performance of every calf raised through weaning to be reported. Red Angus EPDs are calculated from complete contemporary group data - not just the data from the calves good enough to register.

Growth & Carcass Traits! Red Angus publishes genetic predictions for birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight, milk, total maternal, marbling score, rib eye area, and 12th rib fat thickness. Red Angus utilizes real time ultrasound data in conjunction with actual carcass data in the calculation of marbling and rib eye area EPDs. Genetic predictions for each of these revenue traits are more reliable because they are built with Total Herd Reporting.

Red Angus Bulls Described	Trait	Expressed in (units)	Average EPD	2.5 yr yearling Red Angus bulls fit % this EPD range
Yearling Red Angus Bulls	CED	% Probability	4	0 8
Active Red Angus Sires	HPG	% Probability	8	4 12
Yearling Red Angus Bulls	CETM	% Probability	4	1 7
Yearling Red Angus Bulls	STAY	% Probability	10	7 13
Active Red Angus Sires	ME	Mcal/month	5	11 -1
Yearling Red Angus Bulls	BW	Pounds	0.3	2.4 -1.8
Yearling Red Angus Bulls	VW	Pounds	30	22 38
Yearling Red Angus Bulls	YW	Pounds	53	42 64
Yearling Red Angus Bulls	Milk	Pounds	16	10 22
Yearling Red Angus Bulls	TM	Pounds	31	24 38
Yearling Red Angus Bulls	Marb	Marbling score	0.07	-0.05 0.19
Yearling Red Angus Bulls	REA	Square inches	0.01	-0.16 0.18
Yearling Red Angus Bulls	FAT	Inches	0	0.01 -0.01

To receive a FREE 8-page "Rancher's Guide to EPDs" or a 2005 Red Angus Sire Summary, contact this breeder or the Red Angus Association of America.



RAAA "Ranchers' Guide to EPDs" sale catalog insert.

Spend Less Time Typing

No need to type all those pedigrees and performance data by hand. For a nominal fee, RAAA has made a catalog data extract service available. This service will provide individual animal information, pedigree, performance data and EPDs for all of your sale lots. Simply provide a list in catalog order of your sale offering, with lot numbers is even better, and choose among the following formats to have your data returned: tab delimited text file or Microsoft excel spreadsheet. If that's too much computer lingo for you, there are custom catalog templates available

Marketing Update

in Microsoft Word that your data can be "poured" into. Sure, you'll still have to type in your own footnotes, but just think of the errors this service can help avoid. To utilize this service just e-mail RAAA Information Systems Director, Kip Lewis at kip@redangus.org.

Expand Your Sales Force

An entirely new and updated inventory of Red Angus brochures and posters are available for distribution at your bull sale. These posters can be displayed prior to your sale at local sale barns or other places bull buyers congregate. Making the brochures available on sale day may answer questions you didn't even know buyers had. These brochures/posters contain information about Red Angus EPDs and marketing programs. If you've advertised a bull sale in *ARA Magazine* these items will be sent to you in advance of your sale. If you're not sure, please contact Betty Grimshaw (betty@redangus.org) for promotional tools, and allow at least 10 days for ground UPS shipping to ensure they arrive prior to sale day.

The Red Angus Marketing Department offers services to help reach new customers, and marketing programs designed to make them repeat customers. Let us know how we can help you or your customers achieve better results.



2006 FEEDER CALF SALES

DATE	SALE BARN	LOCATION
Jan. 2	Aberdeen Livestock Auction Contact: Kevin Larson	Aberdeen, SD 605-225-2062
Jan. 11	Canton Livestock Auction Contact: Milton Ustad	Canton, SD 605-253-2258
Jan. 12	Farmers & Ranchers Lvstck Contact: Gene Tilton	Salina, KS 785-754-3796



Registration Bulletin

by Kenda Ponder
Registration Department Manager

Spring 2006 Herd Inventories

Spring 2006 Herd Inventories are being mailed out the first week in January. The report will list all animals of assessment age on the inventory date according to Association records for Spring herds as of 1-01-06. Please mark any animals that have been culled and their disposal codes, and add any new animals to the inventory which are not listed. **Find Spring Herd Inventories on-line under "Registration Information" at www.redangus.org.**

45 day window

This system allows a 45 day window opportunity for those animals that calve 45 days prior to, or 45 days after their respective Spring inventory 1/01/06 - 6/30/06 without having to change calving seasons. Spring Herd Inventories **11/15** (45 days before 1/01) to (6/30 45 days after) **8/15**.

Barn Sheets / Ultrasound data collection

Barn sheets must be requested on registered animals for the collection of ultrasound data. After ultrasound data is processed, we send it back to the owner of the animal(s). If summary data is to be sent to parties other than an owner of the animal(s): example, e-mail or fax to a bull test manager, sales manager, etc. please be sure that special instructions be sent to the lab where the data will be processed. The lab will include those instructions in an e-mail to the National Office with data.

REMINDERS...

■ The Rules and Regulations require a donor dam and service sire used for embryo transplant be on file in the National Office as being typed (not parent verified).

■ Parent verification of embryo transplant calves is **not** required.

■ Many breeders question why 'H' is not available on RRTS as a possible reg-type, like 'R' or 'T'. A reg-type of H is assigned by the computer when processing data where a calf is out of a non-owned sire. We do not include the 'H' as a possible reg-type because calves should not be put 'on hold' if the sire owner is the same as the dam owner at the time of breeding. If you have calves to be reported and **DO NOT** want non-owner bull permits applied at that time (if they are available in your inventory) then send **INSTRUCTIONS with your data to indicate that NON-OWNER BULL PERMITS SHOULD NOT BE APPLIED AT THIS TIME.** Therefore, list the calves at an 'R' status when submitting information. We will not to apply the AI certificates.

■ If calves are put on hold for non-owner bull permits at the time information is processed, it will be the member's responsibility to either apply the permits and request registration certificates be printed via the web site or send us a request to apply permits and print certificates if needed on any animals. We **DO NOT** automatically apply non-owner bull permits after information is processed for the animal.

■ If a registration certificate is requested for a calf that goes on hold for blood/dna typing, it is the member's responsibility to contact the registration department to have the registration certificate printed after the information is updated.

■ Transfer on entry via RRTS on the web site is not set up to electronically handle multiple owners at this time.

Ultrasound Processing Labs

National Cup Lab and Technology Center

PO Box 627
413 Kellogg Avenue
Ames, IA 50010-0627
Phone: 515-232-9442
Fax: 515-232-9578
cuplab@cuplab.com
www.cuplab.com
National Cup Lab and Technology Center accepts images from the Aloka 500-V, the "new" Alkoa, and the Classic 200. Mark Henry is the lab manager. Processing fees are \$4 per head.

Ultrasound Processing Lab

1767 210th Avenue
Diagonal, IA 50845
Phone: 641-234-0183
Fax: 641-464-2193
ultrasound@iowatelecom.net
Becky Hays is the owner and lab manager. Processing fees are \$4 per head.

International Livestock Image Analysis (ILIA)

4594 Union Rd
Harrison, AR 72601
Toll Free: 877-900-2333
Fax: 720-533-8909
sherry@ilialab.com
Ilia accepts images from the Aloka 500-V, the "new" Alkoa, and Blackbox. Ilia has its own field image collection software called BIA. Sherry Parks is the current lab manager. Processing fees are \$3 per head using BIA software and \$4 per head using non-BIA software.

Therefore, please submit a JOA via fax, denote that the calf was submitted via RRTS or wait till the calf is registered and then transfer the animal through the Transfer Inventory on the web site. Females do not require all the information listed on a Joint Owner Application, but percentage owned by each owner is required.

Commercial Beef Sire Selection

by Ronnie Silcox, The University of Georgia and Roger McCraw, North Carolina State University



Bull selection is the foundation for building a profitable beef herd. In most commercial herds, bulls are purchased and replacement heifers are selected from within the herd. The sire and dam each contribute 50% to the genetic make up of each calf. One-half of a dam's contribution to her calf comes from her sire and one-fourth comes from her dam's sire. Thus, 87.5% of a calf's genetic material comes from three bulls that were brought into the herd. Sire selection is the major tool available to producers for changing the genetic potential of a herd.

Sire selection can and should be more accurate today than ever before. Beef breed associations have developed programs that use performance information on a bull's relatives in addition to his own records to produce Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs). This fact sheet discusses methods of using these data and considerations involved in selecting bulls to be used in natural service.

Selecting Bulls

There are two basic ways to bring about genetic improvement in a commercial herd, crossbreeding and selection. The purpose of crossbreeding is to produce heterosis (hybrid vigor). A good crossbreeding program is important in improving reproductive traits and production traits like rate of gain. Selection of superior breeding stock is most effective in changing production traits and carcass traits. A good breeding program for a commercial herd will include both a designed crossbreeding system and selection of superior bulls within the chosen breeds.

The crossbreeding system used will affect the type of bull that is needed. In a rotational system, heifer calves are kept for replacements. General purpose breeds of comparable size are normally used. Disposition, calving ease, moderate size, fertility, maternal ability and gain are all important criteria for bull selection. In a terminal crossbreeding system bulls from larger, growth breeds are typically used on smaller cows and all calves are sold as market animals. Growth and carcass traits are very important while maternal traits are not important since no heifers are

kept for replacements. Plan the crossbreeding system before individual bulls are selected.

With a planned crossbreeding system established, the next step is to critically evaluate the cow herd. Look at the cows in terms of how they fit available resource such as feed, labor, facilities and environment. Look at how calves fit market demand. Determine the weak points and strong points of the herd. This will help in describing the type of bull that is needed. It is almost impossible to find a bull that is superior in every trait. The goal is to find a bull with an acceptable combination of traits that compliments the strengths and weaknesses of the cow herd.

After a crossbreeding system has been established and the type of bull has been determined, it is time to decide where to buy. Only consider reputable sources that can provide complete performance records. Performance records and pedigrees are only as good as the integrity of the breeder. Sellers should make results of breeding soundness examinations available and guarantee the quality and fertility of bulls. Herds that are actively involved in their breed association performance program are excellent sources for bulls. Bulls from these herds can be bought by private treaty, at production sales, at central test station sales or at consignment sales. Whether bulls are purchased at auction or by private treaty, be sure the information needed to make a wise decision is provided. If it is not presented, ask for it. If performance information is not available, look elsewhere for bulls.

Growth and Calving Ease

Birth, weaning and yearling weights are normally used to evaluate breeding animals. Actual or adjusted weights may help in making comparisons between bulls in the same contemporary group (a group of animals from the same herd, year and season raised together under the same conditions). Since environmental factors like feed and weather affect weights, actual or adjusted weight can be misleading if bulls come from different contemporary groups. Within a herd, weight ratios help account for some of the environmental differences between contemporary groups. A ratio of 100 means a bull's weight was average in his contemporary group. A ratio of 110 means a bull's weight was 10% heavier than average. Ratios can also be misleading if bulls come from different herds. EPDs, on the other hand, are calculated across herds. A bull's EPD for a trait is a more accurate estimate of his genetic worth than his weight, adjusted weight or ratio. EPDs not only account for contemporary group and herd differences, they also include information on a bull's relatives as well as his individual performance. EPDs are expressed in pounds of calf. For example, if bull A has a weaning weight EPD of +15 and bull B has a weaning weight EPD of +5, the calves produced by Bull A are expected to weigh, on the average, 10 pounds more at weaning than those of bull B, assuming the bulls are bred to comparable cows.

Rapid growth rate of calves is of obvious importance in a commercial herd, but there are genetic correlations between birth, weaning, yearling and

Commercial Beef Sire Selection

mature weight. Selection for high weaning and yearling EPDs without regard for other traits will result in increased calving problems and larger cows that require more feed for maintenance. While rate of gain is very important, maximum growth is rarely achieved without sacrificing other important traits. Set reasonable minimum standards for growth and look for bulls that combine acceptable growth with other traits that are needed in the herd.

Potential calving ease can best be evaluated with birth weight and calving ease EPDs. Birth weights account for the major share of variation in calving difficulty in cows of the same age and size. Because birth weight is influenced by age of dam and nutrition, actual birth weights can be misleading. Birth weight EPDs are much more accurate for across herd comparisons. A few breeds report calving ease EPDs in addition to birth weight EPDs. The range of birth weight and calving ease EPDs that is acceptable depends on the size of cows to be bred. Selecting bulls with low birth weight EPDs is most important when they are to be used on small cows or first-calf heifers. Since weights at all points in the life of cattle are positively correlated, some sacrifices in growth may have to be made to stay within a workable range of calving ease or birth weight for a particular herd.

Advances in National Cattle Evaluation have made estimating a bull's genetic worth more accurate than ever before. EPDs allow valid comparisons of all bulls of the same breed, but they do not allow you to compare bulls from different breeds. Since breeds have different average performance, base years and evaluation procedures, direct comparison of EPDs from different breeds can be extremely misleading. It should also be noted that a bull with an EPD of zero is rarely average. In most breeds zero is the average of some base group of animals. Since breeds change over time, in some breeds it is possible to find bulls with positive weaning and yearling weight

EPDs that are several pounds below the average of all yearling bulls in that breed. Current breed averages and information on how to use EPDs are included in breed association sire summaries. Sire summaries are available at no charge from most major breed associations.

Maternal Performance

Maternal performance is generally expressed in terms of milk production. In a broad sense, maternal performance takes into account more than just milk production of cows. Traits such as calving instincts and behavior are also included. Since there are tremendous differences between beef breeds in their maternal ability, design of the cross-breeding program and selection of breeds is very important. Within a selected breed there are also differences in maternal ability of daughters by different bulls.

Maternal ability within a breed can best be evaluated with milk EPDs. Milk is not measured directly in beef cattle performance programs. It is measured in terms of how it affects weaning weight. A milk EPD on a bull is an estimate of pounds of calf at weaning produced by the bull's daughter due to her milking ability. For example, Bull A has a milk EPD of +5 and Bull B has a milk EPD of +2. All other things being equal, bull A's daughters should produce calves that wean 3 pounds heavier than those from daughters of bull B due to extra milk production. There is some variation in the terminology used by different breed associations in reporting maternal EPDs. An explanation of maternal EPDs is included in a breed's sire summary.

As a cow's milk production increases, her protein and energy requirements increase. Maximizing milk without supplying adequate feed can result in a decline in conception rate. Producers must decide the desirable range of EPDs that will fit within their feed and forage environment.

Frame and Muscle

USDA Feeder Calf Grades are based on

frame and muscle scores. Frame and muscle are highly heritable and they both have a major effect on feeder calf prices. Frame and muscle in the bull should be matched with that of the cow herd to produce calves that will be acceptable in the marketplace and replacements that will perform in the herd's environment.

Frame size provides an estimate of rate of maturity, mature size and carcass cutability at a given live weight. Frame size is generally appraised visually by bull buyers or measured in terms of hip height adjusted to a standard age. Some breeders provide adjusted hip height or frame score on their sale bulls. Larger framed steers gain more efficiently and are leaner than small framed steers at a given weight. Packing plants discriminate against carcasses that are too light or too heavy. For these reasons feeder calves that are at the upper end of USDA Medium or the lower side of USDA Large generally bring the best prices. While larger framed market animals may be preferred, larger framed females in the herd may reach sexual maturity later and require more feed for maintenance. Increasing frame size in the cow herd without increasing the level of nutrition will generally result in a decline in reproductive efficiency.

Adequate muscling is usually determined by visual appraisal. Feeder calves that are not thick enough to grade USDA Number 1 muscle are generally discounted heavily. While light muscled bulls can affect the marketability of calves and carcass cutability, extreme heavy muscling may be associated with structural and reproduction problems. Evaluate the cow herd and determine the amount of muscling required before selecting a bull.

Structural Soundness

Any consideration of a bull's potential genetic contribution to a herd is meaningless if he is not structurally sound and physically fit to seek out cows in heat and service them. Structural soundness is not an all-or-none trait. It

Commercial Beef Sire Selection

usually occurs in various degrees. Bad feet, pigeon-toed, straight hocks and loose sheaths are examples of some of the more common structural problems. It is especially important to critically evaluate young bulls since these problems tend to get worse as bulls get older and heavier. Structural soundness in bulls is best evaluated from the ground up. Inspect the bull's feet, toes, heels, pasterns, knees, hocks, sheath and testicles and study his movement carefully to see that he moves freely and strikes the ground evenly with each hoof.

Visually evaluating a bull for structural soundness also affords an excellent opportunity to evaluate disposition or temperament. Disposition is heritable. A bull with a poor disposition not only causes problems himself, he also produces daughters that can make the cow herd more difficult to work.

Fertility

A good prediction of bull fertility can be made by a complete breeding soundness exam that includes a semen test, scrotal measurement, and a physical examination of the reproductive tract. Commercial bull buyers should not hesitate to ask seedstock breeders for a breeding soundness examination on all prospective herd bulls.

Although the importance of producing viable semen in ample quantities is obvious, semen evaluation of yearling bulls (12 to 15 months of age) can be misinterpreted. Certainly the production of live sperm cells is meaningful, but failure to produce good semen at the first collection of a yearling bull is not conclusive. Young bulls should be rechecked after a few days rest (or weeks if they are less than 13 months old). Often they will produce acceptable semen when rechecked. Normal extension of the penis (free of adhesions) and absence of pus in the ejaculate are positive, meaningful observations, which by themselves are sufficient reasons to semen check young bulls.

A minimum scrotal circumference for bulls should be established as a selection goal. Avoid bulls failing to meet the minimum standard. Scrotal circumference is easily measured and is an excellent indicator trait since a significant, positive correlation exists between scrotal circumference and both volume of semen and percentage normal sperm cells. Furthermore, research has also found a strong genetic relationship between scrotal circumference in bulls and the fertility of their daughters as measured by earliness of puberty. Bulls measured at 1 year of age should have a scrotal circumference of at least 30 centimeters.

Sex drive or libido is also a vital part of bull fertility, although it has little association with other fertility traits such as semen quality or scrotal circumference. Libido testing of yearling bulls in research stations has revealed sizable differences in libido test scores of bulls that were later verified by significant differences in actual conception rate. While libido testing is still in the experimental stage, it may soon be a useful part of some seedstock breeders' bull evaluation programs. It would be particularly advisable to expose bulls to a few cycling females prior to turning them in with the cow herd. Close observation at this time will permit identification of shy breeders, fighters, bulls that form a bond with one particular cow while ignoring others in heat, and bulls that have poor mounting orientation. Such bulls sire fewer calves and are economic liabilities to cow-calf producers.

Putting It All Together

Bull selection depends on the type of cows to be bred and the objectives of the producer. The best bull for one herd will not necessarily be a good choice for another herd. Following are three examples of how the herd situation can affect bull selection.

Producer 1 has a small herd of crossbred cows. He works in town during the day and has a limited amount of time to spend with the cattle. He has at

best average pastures with limited facilities and needs to use the same bull on both heifers and mature cows. For producer 1, calving ease would be of major importance, so low birth weight EPDs would be necessary. This producer may have to accept somewhat lower weaning and yearling weight EPDs to find a low birth weight bull. With his pasture situation, average milk to moderately low milk production would be acceptable. Producer 1 would want to avoid extremes in frame. With limited facilities, disposition would also be a major consideration.

Producer 2 has an average size herd of medium frame crossbred cattle that works well under his management situation. He has good pastures and needs a bull to breed to mature cows in a rotational crossbreeding program. Producer 2 would balance moderate birth weight EPDs against higher weaning and yearling EPDs. He would be willing to accept somewhat higher birth weight than Producer 1 in order to get higher weaning and yearling EPDs. With good pastures, moderately high milk EPDs may be desirable. Since his cows are working well in their environment, a bull of similar frame and muscle would be chosen.

Producer 3 has a large herd of medium frame cattle and plans to breed some of his mature cows to a terminal sire. All of these calves will be placed in the feedlot. Producer 3 will want to maximize weaning and yearling weight EPDs. He will have a higher tolerance for birth weight than either Producer 1 or 2, but he will still avoid bulls with extremely high birth weight EPDs. Since all heifers are going into the feedlot, milk EPDs are not a factor. A larger framed bull may be desirable to produce a specific carcass weight. A heavy muscled bull would also be desirable.

In the above examples, these producers with three different herds and objectives would choose three different bulls. Setting goals and evaluating the cow herd are important first steps in bull selection. ■

Adding Value "Naturally"

Producers find a 'natural' fit with Red Angus and Meyer Natural Angus Beef

By Blake W. Angell, Commercial Marketing Director

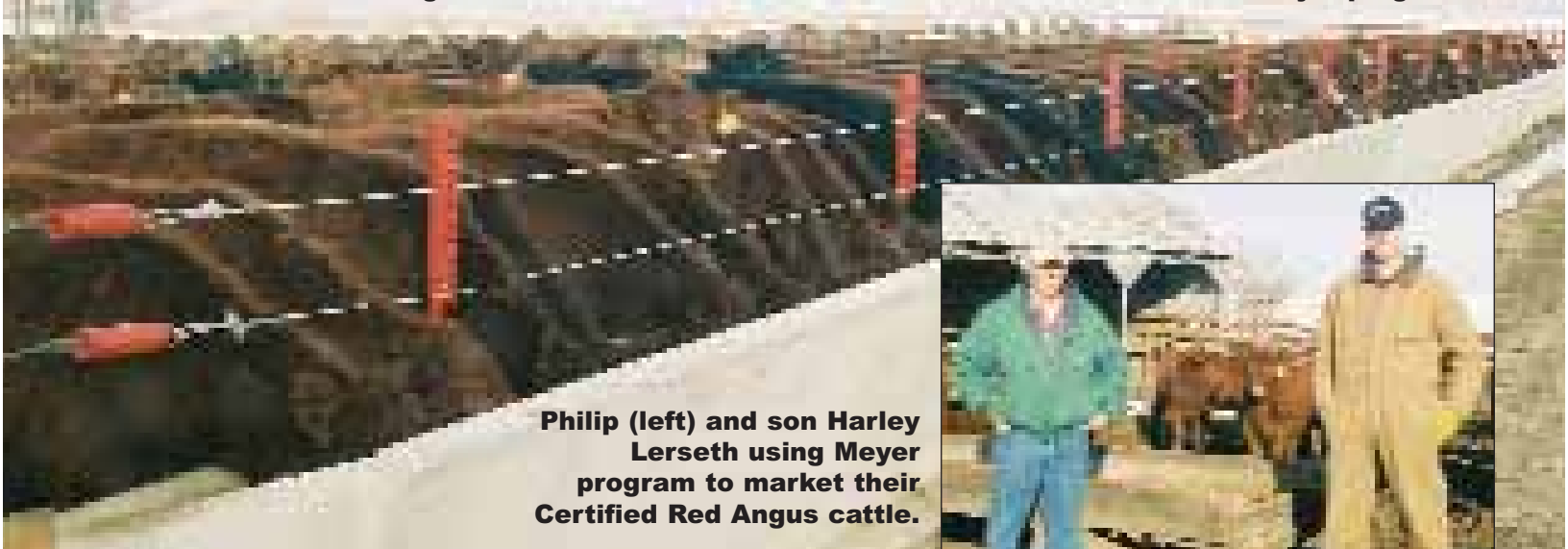
What was once viewed as a small niche market on the coasts is today developing into one of the fastest growing segments of beef sales across the US. The Meyer Natural Angus Beef program (MNA), now in its second decade of providing consumers with an all "natural" beef alternative, continues to see increased interest for their product. MNA is actively pursuing cattle that meet their specifications and aggressively trying to bring those cattle into their system. As many producers are realizing, the demand for natural calves is alive and well.



In just the past two years, the volume of cattle going through the MNA program has nearly doubled. With right at 80,000 head harvested in 2005, the short term goals of the program are to move the weekly harvest total towards 2,500 head of cattle. This increase will result in the need for an additional 50,000 head annually. With an aggressive strategy and pricing system in place, the MNA program is set to make a much larger impact on the "natural" beef market in the coming years. For one Wyoming ranch, this is exactly why they have chosen to market their cattle through the Meyer program.

Wagonhound Land and Livestock of Douglas, Wyo., is a commercial cow/calf operation that has been utilizing Red Angus genetics along with specific management strategies to produce what they believe is a superior product. Although they were raising and marketing "natural" cattle through retained ownership, Matt Johnston, general manager of Wagonhound, and his management team felt there might be increased opportunities available through aligning their production with a specific natural program. After evaluating the different programs available, MNA was the one that rose to the top.

Certified Red Angus cattle on feed at Lerseth Farms that are destined for the Meyer program.



Philip (left) and son Harley Lerseth using Meyer program to market their Certified Red Angus cattle.

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"We were looking for a successful branded beef program that our cattle would fit into and would provide an opportunity for the development of a long term relationship," says Matt. "The Meyer program provided just what we were looking for."

In The Beginning

The Meyer Natural Angus Beef program was the result of Robert E. Meyer's desire to produce a superior beef product "raised the old fashioned way - the natural way." So in 1994, Meyer's began providing a product that was desired by the end consumer but was not yet available on a wide scale. As the system was developed, it was crucial that it be designed around the use of cattle with documented Angus genetics to achieve the meat quality objectives desired. Today, the best of both Red and Black Angus genetically identified cattle are used to supply the beef channel. But, with a Red Angus herd of his own in Montana, Robert and the whole MNA team are dedicated to increasing the percentage of Red Angus cattle funneling through their system.

Beyond the requirement of at least 50 percent Angus genetics, producers must also be able to document the management and health protocol of their cattle. The program requires that cattle be free of growth hormones or implants; free of antibiotics or ionophores; and must not have received any animal by-products in their feed. (Producers can obtain a listing of specific products or items that are not allowed by contacting MNA.) One misconception by many producers about natural programs is that the cattle need to be free of any and all "drugs." The health of the cattle is one of the most important facets of the program; because cattle must stay healthy throughout the feeding period to remain in the program, it is imperative that their

immune system be at peak performance upon arrival to the feed yard. Proper mineral programs at the ranch, appropriate vaccination protocols and the ability to wean calves prior to leaving the ranch are huge contributors to the sustained health of the cattle. Although not all of these practices are required, the more of these a producer can implement, the more value the cattle will have to the Meyer program. Today, with the issues facing our industry relative to the reestablishing of export markets



Red Angus is the foundation of the breeding program at Wagonhound Land and Livestock of Douglas, Wyo.

to US beef, one final item must be documented. Producers need to be able to provide date of birth information on their calf crop. Overall, cattle entering the MNA program must be 30 months of age or younger at the time of slaughter, and cattle that can be documented to be less than 21 months of age will be eligible to supply product to Japan once that market is accessible. All of this information, along with their endorsement from the Humane Farm Animal Care Program as "Certified Humane Raised and Handled," is used by MNA to further expand the domestic and international markets for their product. It is the ability to supply these markets that will continue to add value to the product and provide for expansion of the program.

One of the main obstacles for MNA is the perception producers have about natural programs. Many producers believe that the "natural" programs have too stringent of specifications to adhere to or are too costly to follow due to decreased performance. Yet, many of these same producers are currently producing calves that are eligible without even realizing it. Other producers' cattle could meet the criteria through minor changes to their current mineral supplements or

management strategies. As it relates to the concern about decreased performance, there are several new products on the market that can provide similar results while maintaining eligibility for "natural" programs.

Marketing Advantage

For Red Angus commercial producers, the Meyer program provides one more marketing option to aid in capturing full value for your calf crop, and will work with the current marketing strategies of any producer.

Whether selling calves at the local auction market, over an

internet or video sale, or offering them privately off the ranch, the MNA program is designed to purchase calves and yearlings that meet their specifications. Through an extensive network of buyer representatives, MNA has the ability to bid on cattle that meet their specifications when provided the necessary information in a timely manner. The Red Angus Feeder Fax is one avenue they rely upon as a means of gathering information on potential sets of cattle to pursue.

In addition, the MNA program provides producers who may be retaining ownership and feeding the cattle all the way out, or for cattle feeders who are looking for another marketing alternative, access to a grid pric-

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ing system designed to reward cattle fed under natural specifications. This pricing system pays very aggressive premiums for high grading, Choice and Prime cattle - rewarding producers for supplying cattle that meet the targets the program is focused on.

For one farmer feeder in southeastern South Dakota, the MNA program is providing an opportunity to keep doing what he loves - feeding cattle. In addition to operating his farming and cattle operation, Philip Lerseth of Beresford has also been working for Ralco-Mix feeds for the past three decades. It was through this relationship that Philip was first introduced to the Meyer program.

"Ralco is a company that has always been dedicated to the feeding and supplementation of cattle through a natural means, and it was one of our salesmen that first told me about the Meyer program," Philip said.

This conversation enticed him to look into what the Meyer program had to offer. At that time, Philip was feeding his own home raised calves along with some locally purchased calves under conventional means. After looking into the structure, objectives and pricing system offered by MNA, he was convinced that this was a program that not only offered him the opportunity to expand his current feeding operation, but also could provide an avenue for his son Harley to continue with the family operation.

"The Meyer program is the best natural program out there right now," believes Philip. "It also offers the best opportunity for young people like Harley to make a living in this business in the future."

In the spring of 2002, Philip and Harley put their first set of "natural" calves on feed. Philip recognizes that there is no substitute for good cattle management, especially when it

comes to feeding cattle naturally. They spend time daily physically walking through the cattle to try and identify any potential health problems and attempt to address them naturally when possible. He also believes that cattle feed just as well under natural conditions as cattle under conventional means, plus you end up with a better product. As a result of their success with the Meyer program, they have been able to expand their operation by adding additional feeding capacity. Looking forward, they intend to fill their entire lot with not just MNA eligible cattle, but with all Red Angus cattle.

Perfect Fit

Red Angus genetically identified cattle continue to prove themselves throughout the cattle feeding industry, and this is no exception when it comes to the MNA program. From overall cattle health, to feedlot performance to the carcasses produced, the Meyer folks have been extremely pleased with the consistency of the Red Angus cattle and the way they meet the specifications and target objectives of their program. There was no truer example of this than the results produced by the Wagonhound cattle this past year.

Matt and his team were equally pleased with how their cattle performed through the program. As calf feds, and with many of the cattle being harvested at any average age of 13 months, the overall results of the cattle was 92% Choice and Prime, along with 92% of the carcasses being a Yield Grade 1, 2 or 3. Performance like this is rare, but represents one of the main reasons the Wagonhound operation is using Red Angus genetics as the foundation of their breeding program. Myron Edelman shares the bull buying responsibilities with Matt, and these results illustrate what can be obtained through well defined selection criteria and having a specific end target in mind. Beyond bull selection, Myron also

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played a role in the decision to market their cattle through MNA. In the end, it was MNA's pricing system that proved to be what the folks at Wagonhound had anticipated, and one of the primary reasons for their decision to use the Meyer system.

"We were very pleased with how the cattle did and how well the Meyer pricing system worked," says Matt. "They (MNA) realize they won't get the good quality cattle if the producer doesn't make money and they have a system in place to aid the producer in accomplishing that."

For Philip and Harley, their outlook on Red Angus is also very positive. With Red Angus bulls on their cow herd in addition to feeding out other sets of Red Angus cattle, they have seen the type of results from these cattle that make them believers. They feel the good dispositions exhibited by their cattle are crucial to their staying healthy and on feed. They also find Red Angus to be easy fleshing and growthy, with excellent carcass characteristics in the cooler. Overall, they have been very happy with the results from the Red Angus cattle.

"Red Angus cattle don't take a back seat to any other breed," states Philip. "With good performance and strong carcass traits, we really believe in Red Angus."

The MNA program is very excited about future opportunities that exist not only for their product, but for how Red Angus cattle can fit into their growth plans. More specifically, the MNA program feels that the expansion of the utilization of Red Angus cattle in their system provides a strong point of differentiation in the market place. In a day and age where the "Angus" name has been tied to cattle that only possess a 51% black hide, the MNA folks feel strongly that they are able to provide the consumer a more consistent, more valuable product through the

documentation of Angus genetics in their cattle. The results they have already seen from documented Red Angus cattle, makes the MNA program very eager to increase their Red Angus numbers.

The cattle business has recently experienced some of the best times in the industry's history, but producers will be faced with many challenges due to changes taking place within the industry. From industry consolidation and environmental issues to consumer trends domestically and the pursuit for a global beef market, producers will have to position their operations to address the ever changing market conditions, while at the same time find a way to stay profitable. For some, participation in programs like Meyer Natural Angus Beef will provide them the system they need to not only survive, but prosper in the future.

For Philip and Harley, they believe it will take specializing for operations of their size to remain in the business. They also believe that more and more consumers will continue to place higher priorities on knowing about the food they eat, and will continue to gravitate towards more source verified and naturally grown products like MNA. It is this mindset, coupled with the structure of the MNA system, which will allow the Lerseth family to continue feeding cattle in South Dakota.

"Feeding cattle naturally seems to be the way to go," states Philip. "For us, the combination of the Meyer program and Red Angus cattle really works for us." ■

Editor's Note: To learn more about the Meyer Natural Angus Beef Program and how your cattle might fit into their system, contact MNA by calling 970-292-5006 or by visiting their website at: www.meyernaturalangus.com.

A Little Preparation Goes a Long Way in Buying the "Right" Bull

by Evan Whitley

Presently, I have close to 25 sale catalogs on my desk displaying bull offerings coming up this spring. Every one of these bulls is "good" and will help someone, or else they wouldn't have made it into the sale. The question is, how do you pick the one(s) that will help you? It's simple (or at least simpler than most folks realize) when you implement a plan of action before going to a sale and making a purchase. Here are some general rules to follow, broken into three phases, which might help with your next bull purchase.

Phase 1: Doing Your Homework

1) Develop a set of goals and objectives. This task gets talked about a lot, but far too often it gets overlooked. Ask yourself the hard questions such as, "Do I really need this bull?", "What am I expecting from this bull?" and "Will this bull purchase complement my operation?"

Remember, this animal is going to be one of your "employees." Ask anyone in human resources, and they'll tell you it's a whole lot easier not to hire a potential bad employee than it is to get rid of one.

2) Develop a relationship with a reputable source of genetics.

There are lots of quality seedstock producers out there who are willing to work with you if you put forth a little effort. These folks are paying for their ranches, cars and sending their kids to school with money earned from individuals needing their product. Most of them don't mind spending a little time on the phone talking about their breeding and management programs and answering questions you might have. If they do mind, maybe you should look elsewhere.

3) Familiarize yourself with the breed of choice. I'm going to assume that the breed you've chosen complements the goals and objectives outlined in Rule #1. Now, it's time to educate yourself with the necessary information to choose an indi-

vidual within this breed. Acquire a sire summary and read it. Expected progeny differences (EPDs) and accuracies (Acc.) change, so be up to date. Specifically, use the percentile breakdown table to identify acceptable EPD thresholds for the traits most important to you, and apply these values at the individual level.

4) Don't forget about performance information. Most sale catalogs will contain at least a minimal amount of individual performance data. Use this information in conjunction with EPDs. It's especially helpful when this information is compared to contemporaries and is in the form of a ratio.

5) Narrow your list to a manageable level. It's extremely important to go to a sale with a condensed list of bulls that meet your criteria. I rarely have been to a sale where all of the bulls didn't "look good." Therefore, it's important not to get caught on the day of the sale asking yourself, "Will this bull work?" If he is not on the list, he will not work!

6) Establish a price, but be reasonable. Have you ever heard the phrase "salary is commensurate with education and experience?" Well, it applies here also. You can afford to pay more for an individual you know something about compared to one about which you know nothing. The dilemma is establishing a fair and reasonable value. I can't help you specifically, because this value will



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depend upon numerous factors. However, I will say to stick with your established price. If you can't get anything bought, there will be other bulls and other sales. BUT BE REASONABLE.

Phase 2: Making the Purchase

1) Implement the plan. If you have done your homework, the "sale day" agenda becomes a simple task of visually verifying a proper decision. This verification depends on two key areas: soundness (reproductive and structure) and disposition. Remember, you are going to be the one looking at this bull everyday. Choose wisely.

2) No breeding soundness exam (BSE) equals no sale. Enough said!

3) Stick to your guns. Acquire a sale order, circle the individuals on your list and spend your time looking at them only.

4) Utilize fringe benefits. Take advantage of perks such as free delivery, volume discounts (if appropriate), calf marketing programs, selection assistance (this is where the reputable part comes in), absentee purchase options and any reward programs offered on supplies or services. Another important service to be aware of is whether insurance is offered for the first breeding season. There has been more than one occasion when this "perk" has paid for itself and then some.

Phase 3: Taking Care of Your Employee

1) Get the bull into shape. This entails ensuring he is on the proper plane of nutrition prior to the breeding season. Sometimes it means allowing him to lose a little sale condition or maintaining his condition. The key is to gradually make any nutritional changes.

2) Manage younger bulls during the breeding season. Younger bulls, especially yearlings, need more TLC than older bulls. Don't let younger bulls drag down to a point where they become non-effective. Monitor breeding activity and, if necessary, remove those younger bulls that need a break. More often than not, after a week and a half, they will be ready to go back to work.

Be aware of post-breeding needs. The first couple of months after a young bull's first breeding season is critical. Think about it - he has just gone through his first breeding season, so he should be wearing his working clothes, he is still growing and it is extremely hot outside. Take care of these needs to ensure your purchase stays around for a long time. ■

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Understanding the Ultrasound Info Craze

By Patrick Wall, CUP Lab

Even though ultrasound technology and its application to the beef industry is still in its "calf" stage, the demand for carcass information is growing and maturing rapidly. With each breed association reporting ultrasound data and carcass EPDs independently, comparing the numbers becomes difficult and extremely confusing. In response to countless requests from breeders and buyers alike, a grass-roots explanation of ultrasound data as it is collected "chute-side" is long overdue. A step-by-step description of each image collected is a good method to help beef producers understand the traits measured and how to incorporate them into selection programs, regardless of breed or background, farm or feedlot.

Percent Intramuscular Fat (%IMF) or Marbling

With all of the grid premiums and incentives to raise Choice and Prime cattle, it's easy to see why so much selection pressure has been placed on marbling. The section header implies that the two traits are one in the same. In reality, %IMF is simply an indicator trait for marbling, much like Birth Weight EPD is an indicator of calving ease. With high marbling EPDs and carcass quality genetics demanding top dollar in the sale ring, it is extremely important producers understand what they are buying.

The major difference between %IMF and marbling is that %IMF is a numerical objective measure, whereas marbling is subjective to the eye of the grader. The correlation is usually around +.70 between the two measures. In order to accurately predict USDA marbling score using ultrasound, the same grader would need to be used for every research trial. As a result, a chemical extraction procedure was adopted, using the percentage of intramuscular fat in the ribeye muscle. The collection of %IMF values comes from taking a thin slice of the ribeye in the cooler. External and seam fat are removed from the sample. The steak is then frozen, ground up, and ether extract analysis determines the fat percentage from a sub-sample of the ribeye.

This method captures saturated and unsaturated fat cells, both of which contribute to the eating experience of the consumer. USDA Graders can only measure fat or marbling they can see when assessing quality grade. Typical chain speed in a harvest facility often does not give ample time for some fats to "bloom" or whiten before the carcass is stamped for quality.

Ultrasound machines show intramuscular fat by "hearing" a density change and portraying it on a screen as a grayscale color change. Lean tissue has a different density than fat, thus allowing us to estimate the amount of fat vs. lean on a percentage basis. As a result, the prediction models developed to estimate %IMF in seedstock do just

that; they do not attempt to mirror any USDA grader. To classify and compare the actual IMF value is extremely difficult. A bull with a Birth Weight EPD of -1.5 is often termed a "Calving Ease Sire" with little to no argument. However, a bull with a high Marbling or %IMF EPD cannot necessarily be called a "Prime or High Choice Sire," but merely a bull with good carcass quality genetics.

The most confusing element of understanding ultrasound data is deciphering which unit of measure is actually under your nose, especially in the case of marbling vs. %IMF. As one can see in Table 1. (Courtesy of Iowa State University, Department of Animal Science), the number scale for Percent Intramuscular Fat and Numeric Carcass Marbling Score is close, but not one in the same. There is no written law or breed association rule that defines how %IMF or marbling is published in either sale catalogs or advertisements. When data is sent out from The CUP Lab to a breed association or breeder, it is in %IMF form, simply an average value taken from 4-5 images per animal. Complex computer models estimate the percent of intramuscular fat within a box placed by the interpreting technician in a consistent spot between the 12th and 13th ribs in the image, reported to the nearest hundredth. Some breeds express the EPD in %IMF fashion, but others convert the measure to Numeric Marbling Score units in order to...prevent confusion.

Table 1. Percent Intramuscular Fat and Numeric Carcass Marbling Score

<u>% IMF</u>	<u>Quality Grade</u>	<u>Marbling Degree</u>	<u>Marbling Score</u>
2.3-3.0	Select -	Slight 00-40	4.0-4.4
3.1-3.9	Select +	Slight 50-90	4.5-4.9
4.0-5.7	Choice -	Small 00-90	5.0-5.9
5.8-7.6	Choice o	Modest 00-90	6.0-6.9
7.7-9.7	Choice +	Moderate 00-90	7.0-7.9
9.8-12.1	Prime -	Slightly Ab 00-90	8.0-8.9
12.2+	Prime o	Mod Ab 00-90	9.0+

Understanding the Ultrasound Info Craze

When purchasing bulls or heifers, keep in mind that sale catalogs may express marbling or %IMF in any of the columns presented in the table, not to mention additional data for EPDs and Ratios.

Along with this, breeders may also adjust bull ultrasound data to a "steer equivalent." This attempts to give bull buyers information on how they can expect feedlot calves from a particular bull to grade, offsetting the testosterone effect known to be detrimental to a bull's marbling. If all breeders used the same adjustment, data would be easier to compare. Unfortunately, a variety of unpublished math problems get used. Some use a base adjustment, for instance +2.0% IMF, which may overestimate the genetic ability of the poorest bulls to grade and undersell the top-end genetics. Others may multiply the actual %IMF or the age-adjusted values. If you are unclear if the data in front of you has been adjusted and to what extent, consult the breeder for clarification. Remember, the bull sale you

“Remember, the bull sale you attend first may differ from the one just down the road or the one you catch via satellite or video auction. Breed association websites, journals, and sire summaries are often good "rainy day" sources to help eliminate some of the confusion.”

attend first may differ from the one just down the road or the one you catch via satellite or video auction. Breed association websites, journals, and sire summaries are often good "rainy day" sources to help eliminate some of the confusion.

Ribeye Area (REA) and Rib Fat

The most difficult image to interpret at the CUP Lab is also the most troubling for technicians to collect on the animal. The margin for error when collecting the REA image is extremely small for both lab and field technician alike, especially when the breeder remembers by heart how big the full sib's ribeye measured a year ago. Consequently, the lab takes more calls from breeders with dissatisfied results, even though the ratios and sire rankings may mirror a year ago. I'm still waiting for my first call complaining about ribeyes that traced too big. Understandably, the only live animal measure of muscle currently available is REA, especially important to breeders marketing terminal sires and retail product genetics. From a lab interpreter's perspective, we only trace what we can see, and guesswork more often underestimates the animal's genetic merit for muscle. As a result, more missing data comes back to the breeder in the REA column than any other, but poor quality images create poor quality results.

Understanding the Ultrasound Info Craze

At the CUP Lab, highly trained and certified technicians trace every animal's ribeye by hand. A computer mouse is used to trace the boundaries of the longissimus dorsi, or ribeye muscle; the computer measures the amount of area within the boundaries drawn, reported to the nearest tenth of a square inch. If the interpreter cannot see the boundaries needed, the image is rejected and no REA is reported, even though Rib Fat can still be measured. Again, data is NOT adjusted as it leaves the CUP Lab; most associations use their own breed-specific age adjustment before sending data on to the breeder. Other associations are still working to compile enough data to develop accurate age adjustments for ultrasound traits. Consult your breed association representative to be sure the data you are receiving has been age adjusted. If the data you are receiving is in its raw form, compare the REA value against the animal's unadjusted scan weight, or in a REA/cwt format. Selecting bulls for muscle using unadjusted or raw REA data could mislead one into choosing the oldest animals instead of the heaviest muscled.

“Mating a beef cow that adequately maintains herself on the feeds and forages you have available with a bull that provides the carcass ammunition desired by your customers is a key element to success.”

Ribeye Area is not only used for the obvious REA EPD, but also incorporated into corresponding Yield Grade and Percent Retail Product EPDs. Rib Fat has substantially more influence on either of the retail yield EPDs and is also measured on the same image as REA, though much easier to interpret at the lab. Rib Fat is measured in the same location for both ultrasound and carcass data collection, at the 3/4 position (3/4 the distance of the entire ribeye muscle starting from the spine or medial edge) perpendicular to the muscle. A computer mouse is used to measure the distance from the hide-fat interface to the fat-lean interface, reported to the nearest hundredth of an inch. The accuracy of ultrasound rib fat vs. fat measured on the actual carcass has been questioned. However, there is equal argument that ultrasound may actually be more accurate than the carcass measure. Hydraulic hide pullers found in most commercial packing plants often remove external fat with the hide, a source of variation eliminated when using ultrasound.

Breeders must toe a fine line when utilizing fat and retail product EPDs in their selection program, not only from a breeding perspective, but also matching the body composition of their cow herd to their particular management and environmental resources. On the average, Fat EPD in most all breeds has stayed near zero, though significant

Understanding the Ultrasound Info Craze

genetic variation within the population and/or breeds is quite evident. The reason is quite simple; select against fat and you run the risk of indirectly affecting the breeding/re-breeding rate (stayability) and milking ability of your cow herd. Select for increased fat, and you subject your calf crop to potential yield grade discounts and inefficient gains. The optimum combination of quality and yield for your customers may vary from what your cow herd can effectively produce. Mating a beef cow that adequately maintains herself on the feeds and forages you have available with a bull that provides the carcass ammunition desired by your customers is a key element to success.

Rump Fat

Many cattle producers question the usefulness of a rump fat measurement for the simple fact that grids neither pay nor discount for the trait. Besides, the image takes more time to collect and requires additional preparation (clipping/oiling) of the animal. However, the value of the trait is well documented, though not referred to nearly as often as the more traditional measures of carcass cutability.

In the end, British breed associations may find rump fat to be more useful in predicting retail product since more genetic variation is expressed.

On the surface, rump fat is extremely easy to collect and highly repeatable. The reference point needed to measure the trait uses the gluteus medius and the biceps femoris, two muscles easily identified in the ultrasound image taken over the rump. The hook bone is simple to palpate, a landmark used by field technicians to make rump image collection almost effortless. Rump fat depth is measured at the CUP Lab by physically dragging a computer mouse from the hide-fat interface to the reference point between the previously mentioned muscles, reported to the nearest hundredth of an inch.

Agreeably, very few breeders select bulls or replacement heifers based solely on rump fat, but its genetic merit warrants a deeper explanation. Rump fat by nature is an early developing tissue. Early texts of beef cattle anatomy often refer to it as the "breeding pad," a protective fat Mother Nature put in place for mating, making the process more "comfortable" for both bull and cow alike.

Since scanning age windows are open only to cattle near a year of age, an early developing fat tissue helps breeders recognize cattle with more "fat potential." As one might expect, earlier maturing cattle lay down the breeding pad at a younger age. Thus, noticeable differences exist among breeds and biological types, particularly British vs.

Understanding the Ultrasound Info Craze

Continental breeds. Obviously, saying that Charolais cattle average less rump fat than Herefords is not reinventing the wheel, but using growth trends on rump fat vs. rib fat will help producers better understand how to effectively utilize the trait.

On a ration that meets or exceeds nutritional requirements, cattle will naturally have more rump fat than rib fat at yearling. However, on a high-energy diet, like in a feedlot situation, rump fat and rib fat measures come together, and in some cases, the measures actually cross (more rib fat than rump fat) as the animal nears harvest. Seedstock may do the same if being "pushed" to achieve maximum performance.

The science and technology behind ultrasound is not perfect, but it has established itself as the most cost-effective and accurate tool to assess carcass composition in beef cattle without sacrificing the animals themselves.

In the end, British breed associations may find rump fat to be more useful in predicting retail product since more genetic variation is expressed. Continental breeds often find that rump fat is not statistically significant in retail product prediction because the measure more closely mirrors rib fat. Regardless, rump fat may still be used to identify potentially lower maintenance animals within a contemporary group. Similar to rib fat, rump fat needs to be maintained and controlled. Progress can be made in retail yield, but extreme selection pressure could harm reproductive traits. USDA Graders take a quick look at the rump to see if a yield grade adjustment is necessary as the carcass rolls by on the chain. I would suggest breeders do the same when examining their genetics for retail product, especially if heifers are retained in the operation or sold as replacements.

The evolution of ultrasound in the beef cattle industry is a rather short history lesson. Its acceleration into mainstream seedstock and commercial selection programs is a testament to the usefulness of ultrasound data for cattle operations of all sizes and scopes. The science and technology behind ultrasound is not perfect, but it has established itself as the most cost-effective and accurate tool to assess carcass composition in beef cattle without sacrificing the animals themselves. The growth EPDs developed and established in the 80's and 90's helped the beef producer compete in a performance driven market. Ultrasound data is again helping the beef business to compete, domestically and globally, in a value-based market driven by the taste buds of the consumer. ■



2005 Photo Contest Winners

We once again received a large number of great photos for our annual photo contest. It was tough to choose the winners shown below. Our thanks to all the wonderful photographers who have helped supply ARA Magazine with even more outstanding images than we had hoped for.

And of course our congratulations go to Nan Larson, Gary Peacock and Sharon Crabtree for their winning entries below. Keep up the good work!



FIRST PLACE
Nan Larson • Decorah, IA



SECOND PLACE
Gary Peacock • Covington, TX



THIRD PLACE
Sharon Crabtree • Alturas, CA

Be sure to look for upcoming information on our 2006 Photo Contest...

And keep taking great photos!

Winter Cold Stress On Cattle



Factors that create stress during the winter months are cold, wind, snow, rain and mud. The primary effect on animals is due to temperature. All these factors alter the maintenance energy requirement of livestock. Maintenance requirement can be defined, as the nutrients required for keeping an animal in a state of balance so that body substance is neither gained or lost. An interesting thing to note is that while energy requirements increase, protein requirements remain the same.

Some published sources contain nutrient requirements for beef cattle that include guidelines for adjusting rations during winter weather. Even without published sources, competent livestock producers realize the need for more feed during cold weather. Make sure that water is available. If water is not supplied, cattle will reduce feed intake.

Daily dry matter intake of beef cows with respect to temperature

Temp, F	<5	5-22	22-41	41-59	59-77	77-95	>95
Intake, % change	1.16	1.07	1.05	1.03	1.02	0.90	0.65

The metabolic response to the stimulus of cold involves practically all the systems of the body. The striated muscles shiver, the heart beats faster, breathing becomes deeper, urine flow is increased and the sympathetic and pituitary controlled systems are activated so to elevate biological oxidations (energy expenditure or heat production) in all tissues. The result is an increase in the cow's requirements for energy.

Spring calving cows, and particularly heifers, in poor body condition are at risk for calving problems. The result may be lighter, weaker calves at birth, which can lead to a higher death loss, and more susceptibility to things such as scours.

Animals in poor condition before calving, provide inferior colostrum and lower milk production. This can lead to lighter weaning weights or fewer pounds of calf to sell. Females that are in less than desirable body condition at calving are slower to return to estrus. Therefore body condition at calving affects the current calf crop (milk production) and next year's calving date (rebreeding date).

In most years hay and stockpiled forage can adequately provide the needed nutrients, but it can vary widely and should be tested to make sure it is adequate. OSU Extension has a fact sheet on Forage Testing, ANR-2-98, that describes the proper sampling techniques for various forages and explains the results. Your local Extension Office may also have a test probe and can help with submitting the sample to a laboratory.

There is a range of temperature where cattle are neither too hot nor too cold and their performance is optimal. This temperature range is called the thermoneutral zone. It is the temperature range where the fewest nutrients are needed to maintain bodily functions. For cattle the lower temperatures of the thermoneutral zone are shown in Table 1 (page 80). All of the critical temperatures listed are effective ambient temperatures, which basically means the wind chill temperature is used if the cattle are not sheltered. The critical temperatures also take into consideration the insulating ability of the cattle, as shown by the change between a wet and dry coat.

Winter Cold Stress On Cattle

Table 1. Estimated Lower Critical Temperatures for Beef Cattle *

<u>Coat Description</u>	<u>Critical Temperature</u>
Summer Coat or Wet	60 degrees F
Dry Fall Coat	45 degrees F
Dry Winter Coat	32 degrees F
Dry Heavy Winter Coat	19 degrees F

** From Brossen, R. & Ames D. "Winter Stress in Beef Cattle" Cattle Producer's*

If we have a choice, snow is preferred to a cold rain. We lose what is called "air insulation" in cattle that get wet versus those that are out in the snow. The air pockets between hair fibers are a source of insulation. We lose this insulation when hair gets matted down in a cold rain. The result is that the Dry Winter Coat goes from having a critical temperature of 32 degrees F to about 59-60 degrees F.

From several studies it is estimated that for every one degree below the critical temperature a cow's energy requirement (TDN) increases 1 percent. It is also estimated that for every ten degrees below the critical temperature the digestibility of the ration decreases by 1 percent. This means that when the temperature drops below the critical temperature the cattle need to be fed better. It may be that more or better hay needs to be fed.

Example of Effect of Temperature on Energy Needs

<u>Effective Temperature</u>	<u>Extra TDN Needed</u>	<u>Extra Hay Needed (lbs./cow/day)</u>	<u>or, Extra Grain Needed, (lbs./cow/day)</u>
50 F	0	0	0
+30 F	0	0	0
10 F	20%	3.5-4 lbs	2-2.5 lbs
-10 F	40%	7-8 lbs	4-6 lbs.

Besides cold weather effecting cattle performance producers have another thing to consider during winter, mud. It is less clear what effect mud has on a cow's energy requirements but it is estimated that it can increase the maintenance requirement from 7-30%. If cattle have to deal with mud then their ration should also be improved, to help avoid the consequences listed above.

Another tool producers have to help determine if what they are feeding is adequate, besides forage testing, is Body Condition Scoring (BCS). In the last trimester of pregnancy a cow should have a score of 5, 6 or 7 on a 1-9 scale. If a cow is going down in BCS then the ration is inadequate and should be improved. ■

Source: Steve Boyles, OSU Beef Extension Specialist and Jeff McCutcheon, Knox County ANR Agent

Research Update

BY Harlan Ritchie, Steven Rust and Daniel Buskirk, Michigan State University

Retail Consumers Preferred Larger Ribeye Steaks over Smaller Ones

The National Beef Quality Audit revealed that there is an extreme range among U.S. beef carcasses in size of the loin muscle. Ribeye area ranged from 7.75 to 23.2 sq. in. Previous research has shown that optimum ribeye size for the food service sector is 12 to 15 sq. in. Optimum size for the retail/consumer sector has not been determined, which was the objective of this two-phase South Dakota State Univ. study.

In Phase I, fifty USDA Choice ribeye rolls were assigned to five different size categories based on ribeye area: 1) 9.5-10.5 sq. in.; 2) 10.8-12.1 sq. in.; 3) 12.4-14.0 sq. in.; 4) 14.3-16.0 sq. in.; and 5) 16.3-18.4 sq. in. Fourteen steaks, 1 in. thick, were cut from each ribeye roll, transported to a retail grocery store, and marked for sale at \$8.99/lb in the meat case. Steaks were tallied every 4 hrs. to determine the amount of time that each steak remained in the case. Steaks that did not sell within an allotted time were removed from the case and termed "pulled." Results showed that time in case and percentage of steaks pulled from the case did not differ among the five size categories. However, Large steaks (14.7-17.5 sq. in.) sold significantly faster ($P < .05$) than Average and Small ribeye steaks.

In Phase II, a willingness-to-pay study was designed to determine whether consumers would discount Large steaks (16.3-18.4 sq. in.) compared with Average steaks (12.4-14.0 sq. in.) and to determine whether cutting steaks in half was a viable marketing option for the Large ribeye steaks. A total of 75 consumers were recruited to participate in this Phase. Results showed that participants were willing to pay a premium of \$0.68/lb for Large steaks over

Average steaks. Participants discounted the Large steaks that were cut in half by \$0.46/lb from the Average steaks.

The authors concluded that no optimum loin muscle existed for beef retail consumers; however, a trend existed toward greater demand for larger loin muscle sizes over smaller ones. They added that this study suggests the beef industry should not limit loin muscle size because of the consumer preference for larger sizes. In addition, the authors concluded that cutting large ribeye steaks in half to achieve smaller portions is not a viable marketing option (Sweeter et al. 2005. *J. Anim. Sci.* 83: 2598).

Study Confirms that a High-Protein Diet is Effective in Weight Reduction

In a very interesting study (Weigle et al., 2005), nineteen adults were recruited to participate in a 16-week, three-phase nutritional trial to compare a moderate-protein (MP) diet to two types of high-protein (HP) diets.

The first phase was a 2-week "baseline" period in which participants were given an MP diet consisting of 35% of total calories from fat, 50% from carbohydrates, and 15% from protein. The diet was matched to participants' caloric needs to ensure maintenance of baseline body wt. during the first phase.

The second phase was a 2-week period in which participants followed an HP diet consisting of 20% of total calories from fat, 50% from carbohydrate, and 30% from protein. This phase was calorie-controlled, like the first, to ensure wt. maintenance.

The third phase was a 12-week period in which the nutrient distribution was the same as that of the calorie-controlled second phase (20% fat, 50% carbohydrate, and 30% protein), but this phase consisted of ad libitum

Research Update

intake because it provided 15% more calories than the participants needed.

During the first 4 weeks of the trial, participants successfully maintained their baseline body weights, indicating that compliance with the isocaloric MP and HP diets was good. However, during the final ad libitum phase, avg. body wt. of the participants steadily declined over the 12-week period, resulting in an avg. wt. loss of 10.8 lb per participant. This corresponded with a spontaneous decrease in caloric intake of 441 calories/day (from 2325 to 1884). Body composition testing revealed that an avg. of 76% of the wt. lost was from fat tissue. Participants reported markedly decreased hunger scores and elevated satiety (satisfaction) scores following the Phase 1/Phase 2 transition from the MP to the HP isocaloric diet. These scores returned to normal soon after the 12-week HP ad libitum diet began.

While the authors acknowledged the possibility that the wt. reduction observed in the study could have been due to the decrease in dietary fat (from 35% to 20%), they also cited previous research demonstrating that an even larger reduction in dietary fat coupled with an increase in carbohydrates (no change in protein) resulted in a smaller degree of wt. loss (8.1 vs. 10.8 lb) than in the present study. Therefore, increasing the proportion of calories from protein appears more effective in promoting wt. loss than decreasing calories from fat alone. The authors concluded that the improvements in body wt. and body composition observed in this study were largely due to increased satiety and a resultant decrease in caloric intake during the HP ad libitum phase. They further concluded that an increased proportion of calories from protein was likely responsible for these outcomes. This study clearly validates the effectiveness of a high-protein diet in reducing body wt. and body fat. It serves to counter the criticism of skeptics who claim that high-protein diets are ineffective (SOURCE: D.J. McNamara and J. Heap in *Nutrition Close-Up*, Vol. 22, No. 3).

Top 10 Beef Packers (2005)

<u>Company</u>	<u>Capacity head/day</u>
1. Tyson Foods, Arkansas	36,000
2. Cargill Meat Solutions, Kansas	28,300
3. Swift & Company, Colorado	16,759
4. National Beef Packing Co., LLC, Missouri	13,000
5. Smithfield Beef Group, Wisconsin	8,000
6. American Foods Group, LLC, Minnesota	6,500
7. Greater Omaha Packing Co., Nebraska	2,650
8. Nebraska Beef Ltd., Nebraska	2,600
9(T). Beef Packers, Inc., California	1,800
9(T). Brawley Beef, LLC, California	1,800

SOURCE: Steve Kay, *Cattle Buyers Weekly*.

NOTES: Interestingly, the top 3 packers account for about 76% of total commercial cattle slaughter, and the top 5 account for approximately 93% of the total.

View catalogs at www.redcows.net

Sale Report

**Downey Ranch Inc. & Kniebel Cattle Co.
Annual Production Sale**

Wamego, Kansas
November 4, 2005

Lots	Average
30 Black Angus Bulls	\$2,560
16 Red Angus Bulls	\$2,780
75 Comm. Bred Heifers	\$1,450

The high selling bull was a 20 month old Red Angus bull, KCC Switchblade 700-403, a 1/04 son of Beckton Lancer, selling for \$4,500 to Richard Gardner, Kamric Farms, Beaver, Okla. Cattle sold into five states.

Have any news?

**Sale Reports
Show Reports
News Items**

Calendar of Events Dates

We'll print 'em!

**Please send all news items to:
Ann Holsinger**

Fax: (940) 387-3502 • Email: ann@redangus.org

Show Reports

Ozark Empire Fair

Department BEE - Beef

Grand Champion Female: Harmonys Miss Lana P104, 1/5/04, Nicholas Andrews, Harmony Hills Red Angus

Reserve Grand Champion Female: WCC Rebella/Rebel Chief, 1/17/03, Nicholas Andrews, Harmony Hills Red Angus

Grand Champion Bull: LSF Canyon Creek 3020N, 1/17/03, Larry/Merril Ellison, Harmony Hills Red Angus

Reserve Grand Champion Bull: TE Pro V 4027, 9/25/04, Thomas Edwards, Edwards Ranch

Department YBE - 4H/FFA Beef

Grand Champion Female: WSF MS Maggie Mac 9018, 4/11/04, Shelby Rush, Rush Red Angus

Reserve Grand Champion Female: RRSB Shannon, 2/18/04, Tyler Rush, Jasper FFA

Grand Champion Bull: Ima Mimi P02, 2/17/04, Kayley Reedy, Explore's 4-H

Reserve Grand Champion Bull: RRSB Stud Fuffin, 9/18/04, Shelby Rush, Rush Red Angus

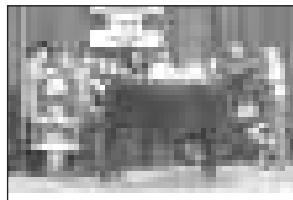
Heart of America Junior Red Angus

Grand Champion Female: WCC Rebella/Harmonys Rebel, 1/17/03, Nicholas Andrews, Harmony Hills Red Angus

Reserve Grand Champion Female: Harmonys Miss Lana P104, 1/5/04, Nicholas Andrews, Harmony Hills Red Angus

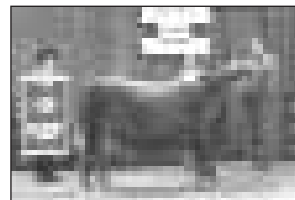
2005 NAILE Red Angus Show

Louisville, Kentucky • November 16, 2005



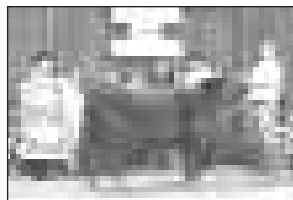
Grand Champion Female:

Meado-West Peek-A-Boo a 4/03/04 daughter of Meado-West Jazz, Solution Genetics/Cassie Johnson, Cushing, Iowa and Devon Lockhart, Hearne, Texas



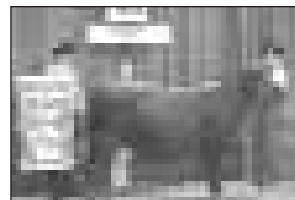
Grand Champion Bull:

Batterson Bellagio 58P, a 3/12/04 son of Glacier Chateau 744, shown by Batterson Red Angus and Solution Genetics of Iowa.



Reserve Grand Champion Female:

Star G Samantha a 3/12/05 daughter of BFCK Cherokee Canyon 4912, shown by Breeze Hill Farm, Bedford, Ind.



Reserve Grand Champion Bull:

NBar Sensation P495 a 5/5/04 son of Red Brylor 4S 138M, N-Bar Cattle Co of Russell, Kan.

RAAA New Members

Winrock Farms Inc
Rocky Vess, Mgr.
256 Montgomery Trace
Morrilton, AR 72110

Big Hole River Red Angus
Keith or Cathy Rash
141 Pennington Rd
Twin Bridges, MT 59754-9729

Mike Steenson
2313 Friend Rd
Wolbach, NE 68882

Neil Beckmann Farm
Neil Beckmann
PO Box 1561
Marble Falls, TX 78564

Lundgren Farm
Lloyd or David Lundgren
West 16403 Lincoln Rd
Spokane, WA 99224

Vess Cattle Co
Rocky Vess
1456 Hwy 155N
Casa, AR 72025

White Cattle Co
Joel and Karri White
420 North Carrington
Buffalo, WY 82834

Kathwood Plantation
Lee W Curley
3954 Silver Bluff Rd
Jackson, SC 29831

Gene McBride GMA Farms
Gene McBride
8925 Hwy 9 North
Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

Buzzard Hollow Ranch
Lester M Alberthal Jr
PO Box 968
Granbury, TX 76048

Wesley Joe Knaub
PO Box 348
Lodge Grass, MT 59050

Hance Red Angus
Paul Hance Jr
10440 CR 5440
Rolla, MO 65401

Lynaugh Angus
Tom Lynaugh
4131 Old Stone Rd
Oregon, WI 53575

Lesch Angus
Jeff Lesch
30862 113th St
Mound City, SD 57646

Gene Murff
2909 Deerwood
Waco, TX 76710

Davis Red Angus
Nathan Davis
PO Box 25
Hay Springs, NE 69347

Michael and Judith McCollor
Box 54
Eagle, MI 48822

Flying B Red Angus Ranch
Patrick Baxter
5829 Dawley Dr
Madison, WI 53711

Greg West
PO Box 1546
Springfield, MO 65801

Arcadia Farms
Aubrey McClendon
RR 1 Box 361
Kiowa, OK 74553

Stevenson Diamond Reds
Clint Stevenson
Box 178
Hobson, MT 59452

Star Light Ranch LLC
Chris Burrows
468 N Six Mile Road
Casper, WY 82604

Durbin Farm
Ronald Kevin Durbin
3570 Dogtown Rd
Savannah, TN 38722

Edenvale Estate II
S. G. Moyo
PO Box AC 582 Ascot
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe 85520

Alexander Ag
Kim and Marsha Alexander
PO Box 516
Roscoe, TX 79545

Cross River Farms
Robert Harper
5836 Trenholm Woods Dr
Powhatan, VA 23139

JUNIORS

Steven C Lane
RT 1 Box 76
Amsterdam, MO 64723

C & H Red Angus
Cameron Hance
10440 CR 5440
Rollo, MO 65401

Nordlund Stock Farm
Samuel Nordlund
44946 151st Ave
Clearbrook, MN 56634

Wade Wells
9425 FM 932
Hamilton, TX 76531

Emma B Foster
1670 Van Camp Rd
Marcellus, NY 13801

Harrison Lee Faust
7001 FM 974
Bryan, TX 77808-6570

Dixie Kay Williams
RR 1 Box 126
Lockney, TX 79241

Justin Ingalls
7470 FM 1602
Jonesboro, TX 76538

Jonathan Walker
1150 S Lyda Lane
Othello, WA 99344

Characteristics of a "Successful" Red Angus Breeder

(Continued from page 8)

that technical stuff, but nothing, absolutely nothing, replaces good old honesty and one's precious reputation and living the Golden Rule. Without it, you might as well not be in the purebred business and probably won't be for long.

5. One more point before ending. Where am I going? What is my mission? What are my goals? What are my strengths or weaknesses? We need a plan or strategy to guide us. Perhaps it might be helpful to write down some ideas and answers to these questions. Take a look back at them from time to time and possibly modify as needed. Our best example for this may be within our own RAAA. We have a Mission, and we have Core Policies which have guided us for over 50 years and they have kept us on course and brought us success.

I promised that this list would not be long or comprehensive; just some ideas to stimulate thought.

What characteristics would be on top of your list? What others would you have on your list? The purebred cattle business is an intensely competitive "niche" industry that requires a special blend of desire, knowledge, skills, energy, drive, personality, brains, financial assets, integrity, goal setting and just plain ole luck to be "successful". ■