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BeefTalk: Serious Bull Buying Requires Window Shopping and Numbers Homework

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Bull shopping is a lot like window shopping--check out the sights, see what is selling and what isn't selling.

A producer should get a feel for the price range and what is needed to land the sires of next years calves. There should be some carryover of last year's bulls to maintain some continuity from one year to the next, yet, the problem of being one or two bulls short always seems to crop up. Adding up cow numbers and pastures to fit bull numbers is always challenging. And there is always that bull that gets sidelined mid-way through the season.

Doing your homework when buying bulls can save a lot of time and travel. One homework lesson includes reading sale catalogs and sale reports. A lot can be learned from these two sources.

Begin with the sale catalog. If the numbers aren't what you want and need, move on to another catalog. The most expensive bull you will ever buy is the replacement bull for the one you really wanted. If the bulls sell too high, don't lower your standards. Keep looking, there are lots of bull sales.

For example, last January, during Bull Days in Dickinson, producers had the opportunity to preview bulls from throughout the region, collect the numbers and visit personally with the breeders of the bulls. When buying bulls for the Dickinson Research Extension Center herd, I like to look for sires that are used in multiple herds and compare the performance of the half brothers from different herds. This gives me a little insight on management techniques and a heads up if the breeding I want is too expensive at one sale.

At Bull Days last January in Dickinson, I noticed two Angus sires showed up on the pedigrees in several producer pens. These sires were TC Stockman 365 and Bubs Direct Deposit 200.

If I was shopping, using these two sires as an example, I would go to the American Angus Association web site, <http://www.angus.org>, and print off the sires EPDs: birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight and yearling height. TC Stockman 365 was +4.7, +41, +76 and +.9, respectively, and Bubs Direct Deposit 200 was +1.8, +44, +77 and +.6, respectively.

At the center, we compare these number with our benchmark bulls. Let me use Landmark Bando 912. His EPDs were +2.1 for birth weight, +31 for

weaning weight, +61 for yearling weight and +.2 for yearling height. His production values within the center's herd were 95 pounds for birth weight, 581 pounds for 205 day weaning weight, 1161 pounds at harvest for the steer calves at 418 days of age and a frame score of 5.1. Landmark Bando 912 offspring have been the second highest net return calves in the feedlot for the Center. They are good calves.

Stock 365 and Direct Deposit 200 would also have an impact on the Center herd. Stockman 365 sons (depending on the female side) should increase birth weight, add 10 pounds to weaning weight, add 15 pounds to yearling weight and increase frame score slightly. Bubs Direct Deposit 200 should lower birth weight slightly, increase weaning weight 13 pounds, yearling weight 16 pounds and increase frame score less than TC Stockman 365.

That is my window shopping for today. Both bulls would impact the center positively for growth. However, Landmark Bando 912 does work on heifers for the center, but at 95 pounds, I would look at Direct Deposit 200 sons for heifers before TC Stockman 365 sons.

Let's make the numbers work for us, not against us. May you find all your ear tags. Kris

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.COM on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0025.

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Angus EPD Benchmarks Unique to the NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center			
	Benchmark Sire Landmark Bando 912	Potential Sire TC Stockman 365	Potential Sire Bubs Direct Deposit 200
Birth weight EPD	2.1	4.7	1.8
Average birth weights	95 lbs	+2.6 lbs*	-0.3 lbs*
Weaning weight EPD	31	41	44
Average weaning weight**	581 lbs	+10 lbs*	+13 lbs*
Yearling weight EPD	61	76	77
Average weight at harvest	1,161 lbs	+15 lbs*	+16 lbs*

* Projected Impact ** 205 day adjusted

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