

The Future – Proven Bulls

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There is nothing more relevant or futuristic in the beef business than a good discussion about buying bulls. This involves a process of selection that impacts the foundation of individual beef herds and the essence of the beef industry. As the discussion deepens, the concept of proven bulls has to evolve.

The result of purchasing semen from bulls that have proven themselves as being quality bulls is easily evident within producer herds. A bigger issue -- that the beef raised and made available to the consumer must be of the highest quality -- is absolutely critical.

Proven bulls, not just bulls, are the key ingredient. Proven bulls ensure that the right pieces are in the mix to allow management to fine-tune the ultimate product, beef. The industry's reputation and future depend on these bulls.

Although not always noted in cattle discussions, the fundamental principle producers must accept is that cattle belong to the producers and the beef belongs to the consumers. The magnitude of that statement really stands out and should stand out as producers look to the future.

The future is really now. Each year brings new and exciting thoughts and promises along with a reasonable dose of reality. Those thoughts, promises and projected reality were encapsulated very well in an electronic journal (Volume 21, No. 3, 2006) titled Choices (www.choicesmagazine.org) published by the American Agricultural Economics Association.

The discussion was pointed. In the future, promises will outweigh reality only if, as cattle producers, we grab "the bull by the horns" and sit up, listen and change. The series of articles identified issues that ultimately will shape our industry. The series included discussions on markets, structure and competition; the value of integrated markets and consumer demand; global competitiveness; environmental concerns and regulations; community concerns and labor; food safety and animal health; and the welfare and care of animals.

All of these issues sum up one reality: The beef business is simply no longer breed 'em, feed 'em and eat

'em. If there is a common thread to all the issues, it is individual producer responsibility.

The future will mandate aggressive producer engagement in business concepts and managerial analytical techniques that will ensure a position within a very competitive, worldwide consumer market. Much that happens on our individual operations must feed into a larger system. Even the large systems ultimately feed into even larger systems.

The ability to cash flow (income minus expenses) may be very local, but the ability to survive as a viable beef operation in the future really needs to be much broader. The opportunities for the future start this spring, following calving, when the cows are rebred.

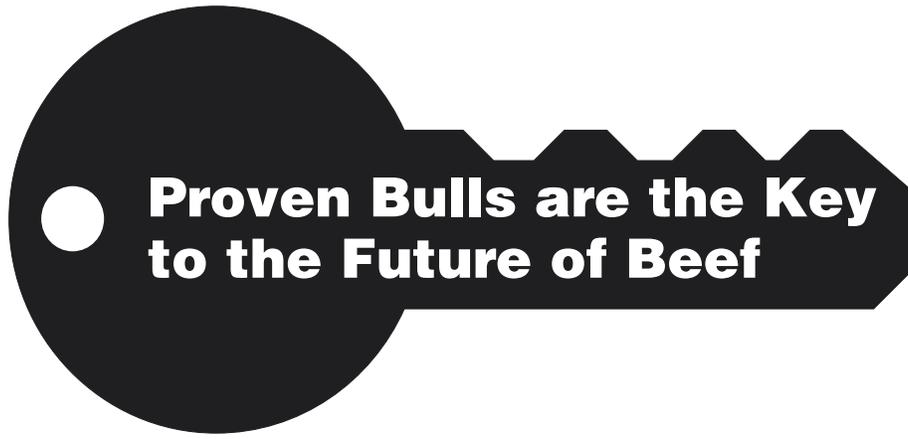
The bull must fit the industry. The bull needs to have proven data that fits producer expectations and meets strong consumer demands. There really is no room for mistakes.

The product that ultimately is placed on a consumer's plate is the product of a bull. A bull that was evaluated, re-evaluated and ultimately selected as the sire. The beef is destined to arrive at a targeted palate that has, as an end result, a very personal experience of taste and flavor. In other words, the consumer has a great eating experience. Cattle producers are in the beef business, but we do need to remind ourselves of the significance of that statement.

The future is the responsibility of all. For beef producers, now is the time to visit with your local genetics company and key seed stock producers. This planning for bulls will bring assurance to the breeding program and production system, and ultimately place quality beef on a consumer's plate.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com. For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1041 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.com on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0332.



**Proven Bulls are the Key
to the Future of Beef**