

A Review of a Good Sale Catalog

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The procedure for buying bulls should be fairly methodical. While the process can be as encompassing as one wants, we can not forget that the genes are what is needed for herd improvement.

The number of sale catalogs received can be overwhelming, but the future return on the time investment of reviewing catalog information is critical. Looks can be deceiving, so that is why homework is necessary.

A good catalog starts out with a friendly welcome and factual information about the sale. This information is fairly common, but certainly is needed. Of critical importance is a very clear and obvious phone number and contact information. (In today's world, cell phone dependability is important.)

Next should be a detailed explanation of the information in the catalog that all readers can understand. Breeders are notorious for descriptive jargon, lingo and clichés that mean a lot to the inner circle. However, there is a question that you should ask. Would a newcomer to the breed know what is being presented?

Trait abbreviations and even Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) vary from breed to breed. A list of only numbers may seem great within a breed, but common courtesy should be extended to the newcomers. The various numbers should be labeled properly to make the reading of the information more understandable. These notations lead up to some very important notes.

Right up front, a herd should present the average EPD values for the various traits the breed evaluates, followed by the average EPD values for the bulls and heifers being sold. Additional information could be provided for the breed, such as the trait values for the top 25 percent of the breed, or maybe the top 1 percent of the breed, depending on the strengths within the herd of the bulls or heifers being sold.

For the bull buyer who is not aware of the breeders within a breed, the review of producers who print the average EPD values for the calves makes the ini-

tial screening so much easier. The individual numbers are important. However, why not start with those herds that are selling bulls or heifers that are above average for the desired traits? This is a quick and easy way to authenticate the future performance of bull candidates.

Once the overall performance of the herd has been determined in relationship to the breed, the fun begins, which is the selection of bulls within the sale offering. Armed with the average value for all the traits analyzed within the breed, the producer easily can find and sort bulls based on their ranking within the breed.

After evaluating the feedlot performance of cattle from the Dickinson Research Extension Center, we realized we needed more rib eye and a greater degree of marbling. Picking up a bull catalog, in this case a Red Angus sale catalog, the Red Angus average marbling score is 0.06 and the rib eye area average is 0.01.

A quick check of the reference sires reveals there are 18 reference sires, but only seven that are above average in both rib eye area and marbling. Of those seven, two bulls are in the upper 25 percent of the breed. No doubt, these genetics would help the center.

The job is to go and find the sale prospects, scanning all the sons of the reference sires that meet our criteria. The next step is scanning all the bulls for their own performance, since both the cow and bull ultimately determine the genetic value of the bull.

One vote of confidence is that through the years it is obvious more people are picking the top bulls because the bidding dollars seem to quickly jump on the bulls the center picks. That is a good thing for the industry, but a little frustrating when the wallet doesn't have an equivalent roll of money.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>. For more information, contact the NDB-CIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

Two Points to Look for in Bull Sale Catalog

Average EPDs for bulls being sold

Average EPDs for similar age bulls
within the breed