

BeefTalk: Bull-buying Basics – Get to Know the Numbers and Performance Will Follow

The reality is that bull buying can be simple.

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A few words on bull buying: Keep it simple. Each year, as the bull-buying season gets under way, the process needs to be thought through. There are many reasons for attending bull sales, but buying bulls is not always the No. 1 reason.

Many times the sale is an annual event that gives us an opportunity to gather with family, friends and breed enthusiasts. There also will be that opportunity for a new buyer to stop by. However, regardless of how much socializing there is, by the end of the day, many bulls, if not all, will have new ownership.

But, as time goes on, more evidence or, should one say, opportunity is available for absentee bidding and purchasing. The day of the sale barn phone, limited to one or two lines, slowly has been replaced by cell phones or internet live video. Sound or keyboard transactions are more prevalent, with very prominent satisfaction guarantees by sellers to producers who buy bulls sight unseen.

In the past, that was a questionable practice. The annual inspection and evaluation of potential new bulls meant a mandatory trip. If the trip could not be made physically by the bull buyer, only the most trusted associate was designated to make the trip. Times have changed because of performance numbers. Producers are very reputable and have been that way for many years. Any producer today who is noted for standing behind the cattle that are sold and is armed with performance numbers can offer cattle sight unseen. The numbers provide depth of understanding and confidence in the performance of the cattle.

Once a buyer selects a bull producer, pick up almost any bull-related publication and the performance numbers are evident. To start, pick a breed and find the average numbers for that breed. For example, I noticed the “Spring 2008 Pasture to Plate Genetics” publication arrived in the mail. It is published by ABS Global Inc., which is one of several companies that market cattle genetics lists for several breeds.

If one turns to page 38, the breed averages for Angus sires are listed for the traits analyzed by the American Angus Association. If one quickly goes to the Web page for the American Angus Association (www.angus.org/), the same numbers can be found. For simplicity, if one uses the traits of birth weight, weaning weight and milk, the breed average for sires within the Angus breed would be 2.2 pounds for birth weight, 40 pounds for weaning weight and 20 pounds for milk.

So, as a bull buyer, a reference point has been established and is known for those three traits. As in many bull sale catalogs, semen catalogs or other listings of sale bulls, the seller generally will indicate where that particular bull rates according to these reference points within the breed. For instance, one can glance through the ABS Global publication and quickly determine the bulls that rank in the upper 25 percent of the breed on page 38.

Images

	Birth Weight	Weaning Weight	Milk
Current sires	+2.2	+40	+20
Main Sires	+2.2	+43	+20

American Angus Association®
3021 Frederick Ave. St. Joseph, MO 64506

Average EPD Values of Spring 2008 Angus

In the case of the ABS Global publication, those traits are highlighted in gold. At least the color appears gold to me. I suspect there could be some subtle marketing tools at work since those bulls that rank in the upper 25 percent for a trait or several traits certainly are worth an extra look. In fact, as one goes looking through the publication, as individual bulls are noted, those traits that rank in the top 25 percent of the breed are circled in red.

Keeping it simple is the point. Bull selection has been made simple. Not all producers agree and many have a sincere desire and need to physically evaluate bulls. However, as the opportunity to purchase bulls sight unseen increases, along with increased confidence and understanding of what the numbers mean, the phone connections and keyboards will increase. Granted, prior to any sale, astute producers are making contacts and visiting bull producers and making calculated decisions. Once the relationship is established and credibility sealed, the numbers really do determine the purchase. The beef is always good, but the reality is that bull buying can be simple. With a little confidence, bulls can be purchased, delivered and turned out. Get to know numbers and performance will follow.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

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[Attachments](#)



PDF - Average EPD Values of Spring 2008 Angus (bt021408.pdf - 17.71 Kb)



EPS - Average EPD Values of Spring 2008 Angus (bt021408.eps - 212.58 Kb)