



BeefTalk: Who Is In The Bull Pen?

When buying bulls, we are really buying packets of DNA.

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The coffee chat is filled with many opinions about how to buy bulls. The art of buying a bull requires an open mind, homework and a vision for the future of a producer's cowherd.

For example, we turn to the nutritionists if we want to get a better understanding on how cattle can utilize peas in rations. Ironically, peas influenced cattle decades before producers started to feed peas by way of Mendel, an Austrian monk.

He discovered the tip of the iceberg and used peas to teach us how genetics work. We actually can select for and change not only peas, but cattle as well.

When buying bulls, we are really buying packets of DNA, the genetic material that is contained in the germ cells of reproducing organisms. Since Mendel taught us the process, we have added to the core of genetic knowledge every year.

While Mendel was reviewing the difference between wrinkled and smooth peas, he also was carefully selecting the parents for the next generation. So who are the parents of the next generation of cattle?

The review begins with an inventory of the bull pen. While we have many breeds at the Dickinson Research Extension Center, this discussion will focus on Red Angus bulls.

Red Angus bulls P329, S13, S48, S49, S59, S6032, S6042, S6054, S6153 and S6158 are in the pen. All are registered with the American Red Angus Association.

It is important to maintain the registration even if the bulls will not be used in commercial production. Buyers should have papers transferred and obtain a membership in the appropriate breed association because the registration number is the tie to the data available on the purchased bulls.

Let me use bull S48 as an example. On the Red Angus Web site, we can type in his registration number (1114780) and the bull's current expected progeny difference (EPD) values can be retrieved.

While the accuracy may not be high for bulls that are not utilized throughout the industry, the predicted EPD values are the best estimate of performance available. His calving ease direct EPD value is minus 2 and his birth weight EPD is 3.

If one reviews the percentile rankings, also available on the Red Angus Web site, S48 currently ranks in the upper 95 percentile for calving ease direct and in the upper 85 percentile for birth weight. Simply put, this bull would be a bull the center would want to turn out to mature cows.

Moving along to the growth traits, S48 has a weaning weight EPD of 44 and yearling weight EPD of 71. These EPD numbers rank him in the upper 15 percentile for weaning weight and in the upper 25 percentile for yearling weight. This bull is expected to sire calves that grow.

Images

Report Card		
Red Angus Bull S48 (1114780)		
Trait	EPD Value	Breed Percentile
CED	-2	95
BW	3.0	85
WW	44	15
YW	71	25
Milk	18	45
TM	40	25
MARB	0.05	55
REA	0.33	10
FAT	-0.01	20

Report Card -
Red Angus Bull
S48 (1114780)

As to the heifers, if the center were to keep them for replacements, S48's EPD values for milk and total maternal are 18 and 40, respectively. These values rank S48 in the upper 45 percentile for milk and in the upper 25 percentile for total maternal or expected weaning weight from the daughters of S48 once they get into production.

In a nutshell, the bull is sound, looks good and is performing well. S48 certainly deserves to be left in the bull battery as a bull for mature cows.

As far as his progeny goes, his EPD values for marbling, ribeye area and back fat are 0.05, 0.33 and minus 0.01, respectively. The percentile rankings for these EPD traits are in the upper 55 percentile for marbling, upper 10 percentile for ribeye area and upper 20 percentile for back fat.

Again, the progeny of this bull predicts that he will produce very acceptable carcasses on the rail and given the growth data, a very acceptable feedlot performance. He is a keeper.

The next step is to review the other nine Red Angus bulls, plus the other bulls in the bull pen. However, for now, I'm out of space and time.

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 - Report Card: Red Angus Bull S48 (1114780)
(bt010809.pdf - 16.79 Kb)



EPS - Report Card: Red Angus Bull S48
(1114780)
(bt010809.eps - 209.81 Kb)