



## BeefTalk 593: Like Begets Like

### SUPPORTING MATERIALS

#### NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center's Second New Red Angus Bull by the Numbers

Trait	Breed ranking (upper)
Weaning Weight	64%
Yearling Weight	55%
Marbling	23%
Rib Eye Area	9%
Calving Ease Direct	84%
Birth Weight	86%
Milk	5%
Total Maternal	18%
Maintenance Energy	32%
Heifer Pregnancy	12%
Maternal Calving Ease	18%
Stayability	39%

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The bull-buying season is upon us and all cow-calf producers need bulls. The Dickinson Research Extension Center also buys bulls annually. It is a fun process. However, anyone who has ever set out to buy a bull realizes the mission is not always accomplished.

Bulls are expensive, so knowing the depth of one's pocketbook is essential at a bull sale. Recently, the center did purchase one bull out of a list of six, so additional bulls are needed.

The list was compiled from information obtained from the bull sale catalog and also website information prior to ever seeing the bulls. At least for this sale, the end result was a list of passed-over bulls, primary review bulls and a secondary list.

Upon arrival at the bull pens, the list was cut to six bulls. In hopes of buying at least two bulls, the bulls slowly walked through the ring, but only one bull was purchased. Historically,

the center has been at bull sales and not been able to purchase any bulls.

From a producer's standpoint, it is important to always make selections prior to the start of the sale. This may mean going home empty-handed. However, it opens up the opportunity to move on to another bull sale.

At the next bull sale, perhaps a deeper pocketbook is needed, but at least one does not sacrifice what one set out to do, which is buy the genetic package that is needed for the cow herd.

The bull brings home the genes. Without good genes, the calves will not meet the producers' expectations and, more than likely, not meet the buyers' expectations when the calves are sold. In the rush to find the right bull, it still is best to remind ourselves of one very simple principle that Robert Bakewell established more than 200 years ago.



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According to Bakewell, "Like produces like or the likeness of some ancestor; inbreeding produces prepotency and refinement; breed the best to the best."

With that, the breeding of domestic cattle began in earnest and the early progenitors of today's cattle breeds were established and set. The same principle works today and is used as one prepares to buy bulls.

"Breed the best to the best" is a simple idea. Of course, the simple part has gotten somewhat stacked because the amount of information that is available on individual bulls has increased. However, looking at bulls, reviewing numbers and setting one's objective still is based on selecting the bull that has the best opportunity to meet the producer's objective.

Whatever process a producer decides to utilize, always maintain the principles that are the core standards of the operation. Each cattle operation has its own wealth of knowledge regarding the operation and management of the farm or ranch and the type of cattle needed. This information is preserved or stored by the owners or managers of the operation and ultimately needs to be utilized for the operation's benefit.

Another scholar from the past, Sir Francis Bacon, said "Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, but to weigh and consider."

Some good thoughts as one prepares to go to a bull sale are "breed the best to the best" and "weigh and consider." Both bear repeating.

All opportunities need to be weighed and considered as one prepares to purchase the best bulls. As noted earlier, the center was looking for certain bulls but was outbid at the auction.

Were there any bulls that did not get sold? That was a quick question after the sale. Three bulls did not get sold, so another opportunity was presented to us.

One bull was on the center's backup list because of his carcass trait rankings. He is in the upper 23 percent for marbling and upper 9 percent for rib-eye area. The bull's in-herd ratios were good, but he only ranked in the upper 64 percent of the Red Angus breed for weaning weight and upper 55 percent for yearling weight.

The growth was acceptable given the carcass data, but the bull's expected progeny differences for calving ease direct was 1 (upper 84 percent) and for birth weight 1.9 (upper 86 percent). This is why he did not make the bid list but, all in all, he was not a bad bull.

The bull ranked above average in milk (5 percent), total maternal (18 percent), mature cow maintenance energy (32 percent), heifer pregnancy (12 percent), maternal calving ease (18 percent) and stayability (39 percent).

The reason for the bull not selling was expressed nervousness prior to active bidding. However, upon evaluating the bull and given the rest of his performance numbers, the center made an offer to match the price of the bull the center purchased. The price was accepted, so the bull was purchased. Mission accomplished.

During bull evaluation, one keeps in mind Bakewell's "like begets like." However, managing a cattle herd is not a perfect world, but tomorrow will bring a new day.

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.

