



BeefTalk 713: Electronic Bidding for Bulls: The Wave of the Future

SUPPORTING MATERIALS



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Recently, the Dickinson Research Extension Center finished putting bulls in the pen for summer breeding. Although bull selection started in earnest as the year ended, the actual purchases take awhile to complete.

Bulls that are needed are not always affordable, and sometimes scheduling conflicts get in the way. Interestingly, of the last four bulls the Dickinson Research Extension Center purchased, three were purchased through the process of electronic bidding. In other words, the center was able to purchase available bulls by using a computer. No one needed to go the sale.

The process, as noted earlier, started at the end of the year as the center evaluated production data and set expected

progeny difference (EPD) goals for our new bulls. Once the acceptable ranges in EPD values were determined, the center utilized the Internet to locate potential herd sires that would meet those goals.

Once producer herds that were utilizing the desired sires had been identified, the individual producer's information was obtained to find out which yearling bulls would be available for sale. Generally, the data for individual yearling bulls that were for sale also could be found on the Internet by utilizing the individual bull's registration number or data provided by the seller.

The convenience offered by online bull sale catalogs and videos that can be downloaded, reviewed and potential bulls identified is a critical component of today's bull marketing. Once determinations had been made, the center contacted the electronic bidding company, arranged for permission to bid and then waited for the sale.

As the bulls went through the ring, a click of the mouse and the bidding process was in play. Eventually, the center



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attained the bulls that were needed.

“What, you did not look at the bull?” That question is not rare in bull-buying circles these days. It begs for the evaluation of a bull by phenotype (appearance of the bull) versus genotype (genes of the bull).

That being said, what is interesting and worth a moment of reflection is the slowly evolving processes of purchasing bulls or replacement stock in general. Although some producers would prefer that we stick to the beef business, it is not a practical approach in today’s ever-evolving agricultural enterprise. The competition is real from afar and from within.

Historically, most farms and ranches are familiar with the spring shipment of chicks. Even if one frowns a bit at the mention of fowl, the point is that most farms and ranches have or had poultry for eggs and meat. Diversity seemed to be a good thing, and mom’s fried chicken certainly was worth the allocation of some table space.

Today, oodles of chicks still are shipped nationwide to expectant farms and ranches to meet the demand for home-raised fowl. These chicks are ordered sight unseen and arrive with all expectations met.

Whether for table birds or eggs, the parental genetics are prepackaged and arrive meeting the expectation of the grower. Interestingly, the backyard producer and the commercial producer have access to the same chicks. These are chicks that perform according to specifications determined by the parental lines that are used to make the offspring.

Even in the swine business, although the box is bigger, replacement stock arrives by truck and was ordered just like poultry. The replacement gilt or boar came from predesigned specifications through specific maternal and parental breeding lines. These lines are designed to maximize hybrid vigor and the specific genetic traits needed to meet end-product demand.

The dairy business is more like the swine business than the beef business. Oftentimes, replacement heifers are purchased with specific desired genetics in mind and mated through artificial insemination to data-intense sires. Dairy sires have progeny throughout the dairy world, and this data is retrieved, analyzed and utilized to produce the next generation of dairy cattle.

If one was to leave the livestock industry and temporarily glance at the grain business, one also would ascertain quickly the magnitude of genetics. The seed or germ plasma for the multitude of crops to be planted this spring is purchased primarily from genetic seed companies. The business is very regulated and critical to this country’s capacity to produce essential food crops.

Returning to the beef business, the expectation of buying bulls by the EPD numbers is very real, along with the expectation that the seller screens the bulls to meet the buyer’s satisfaction.

It is a changing world.

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.

