



BeefTalk 534: Simple Bull Rankings Fill the Bull Pen

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Report Card – 8 Red Angus Bulls								
Dickinson Research Extension Center								
Bull	EPD CED	EPD BW	EPD WW	EPD YW	EPD Milk	EPD Marb	EPD REA	EPD FAT
V146	A	A	C	C	A	A	B	C
V162	A	A	C	C	A	A	A	C
V005	A	A	C	C	A	A	A	C
V131	A	A	C	C	A	A	A	C
V103	A	A	C	C	B	A	B	C
U059	C	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
WD12	C	C	A	A	A	B	A	A
WD45	A	A	B	B	A	B	A	C

For EPD values, A = Upper 25% of breed percentiles; B = Upper 50% of breed percentiles; C = less than 50% of breed percentiles

Does the data support keeping them, or are there better bulls on the market that will meet your production goals?

The Dickinson Research Extension Center utilizes many bulls and always evaluates bulls at the time of purchase and periodically throughout their life span. Perhaps the most challenging evaluation is to ask if the bulls meet the current objectives of the breeding program or expected market for the calves.

Many good beef programs remain as words only if the right genetics is not in the bull pen to get the desired calf crop.

For the center, the heifer development program is being scaled back, which means the current inventory of calving-

ease heifer bulls was reduced. In terms of future programs, the center has two different needs.

The first is for bulls that will sire heavy-muscled calves with a reduced frame and a slightly slower growth rate. These calves obviously will end up on a grass program and are projected to go to an older yearling market.

The second group of bulls will need to sire calves for the traditional fast-gaining, high-lean calf- fed market. These calves will be age and sourced for the less than 20 month of age calf market.

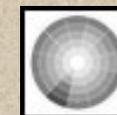
However, before either of these criteria can be discussed, the older bulls need to be evaluated based on soundness. Unsound bulls are not kept because putting more resources into a bull that more than likely will have limited breeding capacity is impractical.

Producers should evaluate their bulls periodically, especially when the bulls are penned where they can be observed closely. That slow-moving, standoffish bull may be covering up latent pasture injuries or fresh injuries due to the rough crowd in the bull pen.

The harsh reality is that small problems tend to become big problems. Even minor structural problems often will develop into movement problems during future breeding seasons.



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The pecking order also can get severe enough that some bulls simply won't breed. The old saying that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" applies now because the time to be thinking about next spring's breeding soundness exams is now.

With the cold weather setting in, the best prevention for bull infertility is a well-bedded bull pen with limited exposure to the wind. Bulls need to be bedded and protected from severe cold to prevent scrotal frostbite.

After the review, only 10 bulls made the cut for next season. Two are Lowline bulls, while the others are Red Angus. All of the Red Angus bulls are registered with the American Red Angus Association and the registrations and data are current. Everyone is busy, so keeping up on the bull pen is not easy, but all the bulls are in good physical condition.

The bottom line is that the remaining bulls have a purpose, which is to fill the weaning pens in the fall of 2011 with the calves that the center desires. Seems like a long way off, but the calves will get here soon enough.

All the bulls were rated for some of the expected progeny differences (EPD) available from the Red Angus Association. The challenge with data is information overload. The information available on sale day was impressive enough to buy on sale day or the bulls were simply affordable. The question is, "Are they still good enough to stay or are there better bulls?" To make the process simple, the bulls are ranked and scored based on the desired EPDs.

If the bull scores in the upper 25 percentile within the breed for a specific EPD trait, the bull received an A. If the EPD value is in the upper 50 percentile, but less than the 25 percentile, the bull received a B grade. If the bull's EPD value was in the lower 50 percentile, the bull received a C grade.

Having gone through the exercise, eight bulls passed the center's needs, while the rest did not. In summation, the bull pen has eight good, meaty Red Angus bulls that vary in frame size. With the bull-buying season starting early next year, the center can better evaluate how many bulls are needed and, like any producer, can develop a budget to work with.

The process may seem cumbersome, but the take-home point is to gather some data and rank the bulls. Does the data support keeping them, or are there better bulls on the market that will meet your production goals? These are your cattle, so you need to become comfortable working the numbers and incorporating data into your decisions to ultimately meet your goal.

Happy bull sorting and turkey eating.

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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