



BeefTalk 648: Now is the Season of Bull Buyers and Sellers

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

The Bull Buyer/Seller Relationship

1. Seller actually must attract the buyer
2. Buyer must find a bull that easily fits into the operation

In the cattle business, herd health, nutrition, genetics and breeding all rely on professional advice to keep the herd in business, so marketing should be no different.

The bull-buying season certainly is here, and I hope those who need some good replacement bulls are busy shopping. Like a good ice pond with way too many ice houses loaded with fishermen, who gets the fish (in this case, the bull) takes luck and good planning.

To start, for the money spent on bull advertising, two very important functions should occur. For the seller, the ad must attract buyers. For the buyer, the ad should provide some information about the bulls that are being offered for sale.

Two recent conversations make the points well. First, there is the beautiful ad that attracts people.

“From a graphic design standpoint, advertisers have to capture the interest of the reader,” says Sheyna Strommen, communications director for a local livestock publication. “Photos cause people to stop and look at an ad much faster than a table of data because our eyes are drawn to images that appear on a page. Corresponding data on that ad might inspire a potential buyer to call for a catalog. Some advertisers want to list so much data along with the photo that the font size becomes nearly illegible and too small for many people to read.”

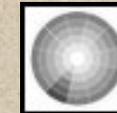
Likewise, an independent artificial insemination technician and breeding consultant, Dave Myhrum, says: “In discussing bulls in the bull catalog with producers, I tend to refer to breed trait averages printed at the bottom of each page as often as bull-to-bull comparisons. They are very helpful, so I completely agree with the idea of including breed and herd averages in sale catalogs and advertising. I’d hope that this would go some way in keeping the bull buyer focused on what needs to be focused on.”

Both cases draw on the importance of the two points. A clear ad will attract people, and enough information and data in the ad also will add credibility.

“The best place for much of this data, in my opinion, is the sale catalog or flier, but pictures are still important to include in these marketing tools, from a graphic design standpoint, because they break up the page, give the eye some relief and make the data easier to digest,” Strommen says.



Full Color Graphic
[\[click here\]](#)



Grayscale Graphic
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Adobe PDF
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Clearly, if one is to be in the bull business, time spent with professional marketers is critical. In the cattle business, herd health, nutrition, genetics and breeding all rely on professional advice to keep the herd in business, so marketing should be no different.

The breeder of the bull needs to make the best presentation possible to catch the buyers. On the other hand, the buyers need to be astute and well-informed to make good purchases.

Myhrum says his most dreaded question from producers before every breeding season is: "What's the hot bull this year?"

"I usually reply that I've got two tanks full of 'hot bulls,' so what are you trying to get done with your operation?" he says. "I know what they're asking. My point to them is that prior to determining which bull(s) will work for their program, they must have a clear idea of what their program is."

As noted, a good ad will attract a buyer and maybe even help the buyer clarify what is needed. However, an astute buyer will scan the ad quickly, looking for a creditable point and reason to make a follow-up contact.

If there is one common mistake, some ads seem to take for granted that all potential buyers are familiar with the cattle they are offering for sale. Yes, established buyers will recognize the producer, but the ability to attract new buyers who may not be familiar with your breed or reputation requires a second read.

Sometimes the most obvious, such as breed, is left out. One should not make assumptions and leave out information that might be critical to new buyers because the bull business is very competitive. For the bull producer with fewer customer cows to breed, fewer bulls will be sold.

Likewise, the bull buyer is being forced to bid more dollars for the better bulls. A common reaction is to put more cows out with more expensive bulls, which again is a reason to buy fewer bulls.

"The first step for producers is to be able to articulate a clear idea in his or her own mind of what the operation is trying to produce," Myhrum says. "Call it goals, performance standards, markets or something else. These goals should drive what traits the producer may need to focus on and ultimately what bulls to buy."

Just like fishing, bull producers need to know what fish are in the pond and work the market.

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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