

# Value of Bull to Commercial Herd Exceeds 'Relative' Value

*A good bull is the best investment a producer can make.*

by **PAUL SCHATTEBERG**,  
*Texas AgriLife Extension*

The value of bulls in commercial herds goes beyond the "relative" value typically ascribed to them in market pricing, said a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service expert.

Joe Paschal, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension livestock specialist, said a good bull is likely the "best investment" a cattle producer can make.

"In publications referencing cattle values for commercial producers, as well as reports from beef breed associations, the value of a bull is often given as equivalent to the average value of five weaned calves," said Paschal. "This has been a long-held comparison for determining the value of a bull, but it really doesn't take into account all aspects of what bulls provide to the herd."

Paschal said the value of one bull to five weaned calves resulted from a relative

equivalency identified as market prices fluctuated over the past several years.

"At least up until around 2010, producers paid less than 50% of the value of those five calves on a bull," Paschal explained. "Then from 2011 until 2015 producers began to pay more, including up to 100% of the value of five calves in 2013. Then, in 2015, producers paid up to 150% of the value of five calves for one bull. When calf prices dropped in 2016, the ratio dropped back to about 115% — between \$5,000 and \$5,250 — closer to the average value of the five calves."

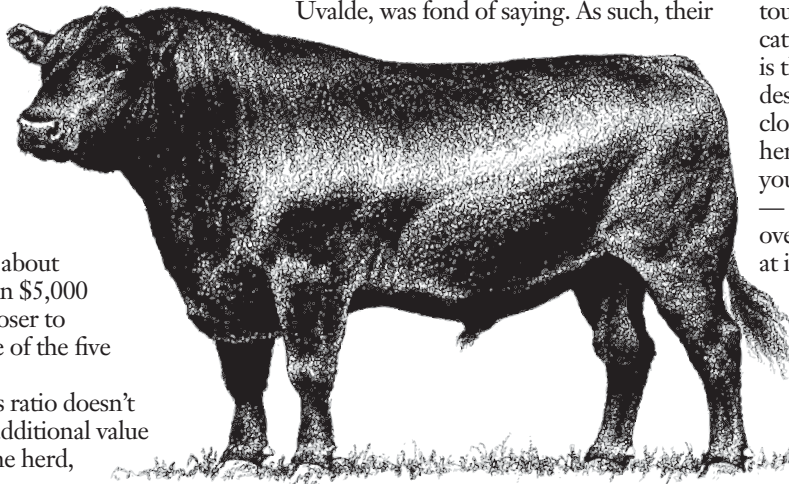
However, this ratio doesn't fully reflect the additional value bulls supply to the herd, Paschal said.

"Bulls supply the genetics for the next generation of replacement females in most commercial herds, except those strictly using terminal crossing," he said. "It should be remembered that bulls are more than just 'cow fresheners' as my former colleague, Dr. Rick Machen, retired AgriLife Extension livestock specialist in Uvalde, was fond of saying. As such, their

value goes beyond the market price for five head of calves."

Paschal said if a bull is used for three years and the producer does not introduce any outside female replacements into the herd, that bull would then be responsible for up to 87% of the cow herd's genes.

"A lot of products and equipment are touted as being the best investment a cattle producer can make, but a good bull is the only thing that can really match that description," he said. "If you maintain a closed herd, the genes entering the cow herd will come completely from the bulls you select, and that's a huge contribution — for better or worse — to the herd's overall genetic makeup. When you look at it from that perspective, you see just how valuable a good bull is to a commercial cow herd."



**Editor's Note:** Paul Schattenberg is a media relations specialist and news writer for Texas AgriLife Communications.

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