



parameters on what he wants in weaning weight (WW), birth weight (BW) and Milk, and looks at the actual numbers of intramuscular fat (IMF) and ribeye area (REA). He also studies pedigrees.

“Do not single-trait select. EPDs are good enough that you can end up chasing specific ones and going down a rabbit hole,” Rutan warns. “We want above-average, but no extremes. We don’t need to chase them.”

Once he determines his parameters, he color-codes his sale book for ease and speed during the sale. He picks one color for bulls that meet his parameters, and another color for those that don’t. With this system, he only has to deal with price on sale day. By using bulls twice, he and his partner can afford to spend more and have a better shot of getting the bulls they want.

“Any time, calving-ease bulls are going to cost the most money. That’s why we AI (artificially inseminate) heifers,” he says, noting that often he can buy a half or three-quarter sibling of a high-calving-ease bull for cleanups on heifers and get good results.

Bullock warns that calving ease direct (CED) gets a lot of attention, but “once you have a level of calving ease that works with your cow herd — you have no issues with your level of calving ease — you don’t need to add more,” he warns.

Rutan and Boyer buy bulls from operations in which the cows are managed like commercial cows.

Says Boyer, “Our ranch is in

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Strategies offered for getting the most out of sale day.

by Kasey Brown, associate editor

A 30-second action could affect your operation for the next five to 10 years. You might be full from the sale-day lunch, but your mind shouldn’t be drowsy as the action starts.

The trick to a successful bull purchase is doing homework ahead of time. Ask yourself two questions, recommends Darrh Bullock, beef cattle genetics professor and extension specialist from the University of Kentucky. Does that bull fit your operation? Does he add value?

The first step in selecting a bull is knowing how you are going to market his calves, Bullock says. Your marketing scheme will determine the expected progeny differences (EPDs) and selection indexes on which to hone in (see sidebar).

Jim Boyer, 333 Ranch, Elko, Nev., has a large operation that markets its calves as age- and source-verified, non-hormone-treated cattle (NHTC), and never-ever 3 (NE3). His calves are eligible for export, so consistency

in weaning weight and frame are important. He achieves this by selecting for similar EPDs with a 60- to 75-day bull turnout. Additionally, buying bulls from a similar environment is crucial.

David Rutan, Morgan Ranches, Jordan Valley, Idaho, has a fall-calving herd due to elevation, feed availability and marketing opportunities. He partners to buy bulls with a spring-calving operation, letting them afford higher-quality bulls for double the use.

Sale-day tips

“Understanding EPDs is very important for how they will

affect a breeder’s herd and its replacement heifers. Regardless of a breeder’s parameters, be consistent within that year’s bull turnout group,” Boyer recommends. “Once a breeder selects the EPD traits they are looking for, we have had the best luck with buying bulls that are from a similar environment. By using breeding bulls from a similar environment, those characteristics on the paternal side have, over time, led to increased calf survival. This also translates into better long-term traits being passed on to our replacement heifers.”

On sale day, Rutan has a simple and effective system.

For EPD selection, he doesn’t want anything below average, and there are very few bulls that are good in every trait. He sets his

EPD cheat sheet for marketing strategies

Darrh Bullock, beef cattle genetics professor and extension specialist from the University of Kentucky, recommends keeping these EPDs in mind for each marketing scheme.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ▶ Selling weaned calves, keeping replacements | ▶ Backgrounding calves, keeping replacements | ▶ Retaining ownership, no replacements kept |
| Weaning weight | Milk | Beef dollar value index (\$B) |
| Milk | Calving ease maternal | |
| Calving ease maternal | Calving ease direct | |
| Calving ease direct | Mature weight | |
| Mature weight | Yearling weight | |
| | Residual average daily gain | |

rough, mountainous terrain with inconsistent food sources. It's a Darwinian environment."

Relationships are big when it comes to determining a seedstock provider. Boyer buys bulls from about five breeders consistently, but he started with a list of 50 bull breeders. Both the commercial and seedstock outfits should know each other's goals and environments.

Before sale day, check out the potential bull's phenotypic traits by seeing him in person or video. Bullock suggests looking at body capacity, structure and muscling; and be on the lookout for red flags. Structure is a deal-breaker, he says.

In person, Boyer looks for reasons *not* to buy a bull, like long toes or bad stifles, hips or back. From his own experience, a longer-framed bull tends to do better traveling to find food and water.

Avoid extreme overconditioning. Bullock warns against selecting a

bull with a body condition score (BCS) of 7 or more on a scale of 1 to 9.

"Fat bulls have fertility issues. Everybody says they don't want fat bulls, but those are the ones they buy," Bullock laments.

He prefers bulls with a large scrotal circumference. This is the one trait in which he looks at the actual number vs. the EPD.

Personally, he says, he won't buy a bull that measures less than 32 centimeters (cm) as a yearling.

Some cattlemen say the phenotype of a bull affects calving ease of his daughters, like shoulder structure and head shape.

However, Bullock recommends against using those traits for selection.

"Just look at the calving ease EPD. It tells you more than anything you can see on a bull," he says. "The research has clearly shown that shape is not what contributes to calving difficulty.

That's all picked up in that calving

ease EPD, and that's what I encourage people to look at."

He urges cattlemen to remember that, with EPDs, actual measurements don't add value to decision-making because EPDs already take those into account; along with pedigree information, performance, previous progeny and genomic information.

Measuring success

Tracking success of a bull is difficult, because it takes two years to "see whether that bull was worth a darn," says Boyer. He keeps 18 breeding pastures and is able to track weaned calves by bull. With this kind of ranch data, he looks for bulls out of the same or similar lineage to past successful bulls.

Rutan also sells his calves through value-added program video sales. Again, relationships come into play, because he gets information back from his feeder in Nebraska. That quality and yield

grade information tells him if he's going in the right direction.

Even though both sell at weaning, they keep the end of the line in mind. Boyer cites chefs and retailers who say carcasses and rib steaks are too big.

"The people who buy beef are the people we work for," Boyer emphasizes. "If they want smaller cattle, we need to produce smaller cattle. We need to listen to our beef buyers. They want a 1,200-pound steer, not a 1,400-pound steer," adding that cattlemen have the tools to make that happen.

Rutan adds: "Don't lose sight of the fact that you need functional cattle, or that you are raising food for people. Select is not what I want to eat; and we want people to have a good meal.

"A wise old guy told me to always buy a better bull than you think you can afford," he concludes. "We try to buy good ones, and we think they do pay off." |

Angus Beef Bulletin January 2019



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Dodge City, KS

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February 22, 2019

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75 Fall Yearlings
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Proven genetics backed by reputation programs and breed-leading AI sires.



Basin Payweight 1682
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| | |
|------|---------|
| BW | +7 |
| WW | +68 |
| YW | +120 |
| MILK | +30 |
| Marb | +77 |
| RE | +28 |
| \$W | +87.55 |
| \$B | +153.88 |



HA Cowboy Up 5405
18286467

| | |
|------|---------|
| BW | +2.6 |
| WW | +78 |
| YW | +140 |
| MILK | +7 |
| Marb | +25 |
| RE | +66 |
| \$W | +46.60 |
| \$B | +168.08 |



Baldridge Colonel C251
18493773

| | |
|------|---------|
| BW | +1.6 |
| WW | +65 |
| YW | +118 |
| MILK | +22 |
| Marb | +72 |
| RE | +1.08 |
| \$W | +59.63 |
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Dennis, Darin, Russ, Bernie

EPDs as of 12/06/18

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