



The Angus Link

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Feeling lost when selecting bulls?

Would the geographically gifted individual who has never been lost in a shopping mall please raise your hand?

A few months ago, I — along with every other husband, father, etc. who was doing his Christmas shopping early (*two* days before Christmas instead of on Christmas Eve) — braved the bustling shopping malls to find those perfect Christmas gifts for loved ones. Being my first Christmas as a married man, I embarked on this task with my new bride, Amy.

As we parted ways for our separate gift-gathering expeditions, I was told, “Meet me outside of Dillard’s at 2 o’clock.”

“See you then,” I said, as I sped off on my mission.

About 1:45, I realized that it was time to venture toward our specified rendezvous point. Merging into mall foot traffic, I dodged carolers, teenagers, and soccer-moms each dragging 16 shopping bags and an open-topped cappuccino, as I looked for the large, beaming white letters of Dillard’s. After being swept aimlessly by the crowd’s flow for several minutes, I finally decided to seek the assistance of a mall map on a kiosk. I was LOST.

Now let me preface my dilemma by saying that I normally have a decent sense of direction. But once I set foot inside a shopping mall, it’s history. It’s as if the elevator music from the speaker system mixes with the noise from the mall’s fountain and the smell of 29 different scents of perfume from each department store, and it completely nullifies any geographical bearings I once had. It then occurs to me that the retailing wizard who conceptualized shopping malls was a genius. Ruthlessly cruel, but an absolute genius.

So, there I was; in front of this map, attempting to find our precise meeting place, when I realized that there were two Dillard’s stores in the mall! What’s more, there were also four floors. To top it all, some group of baggy-pants-wearing-kids must have stolen the “You are here” stickers from the maps.

Suddenly, I felt like I was trying to buy

bulls for my commercial cow herd.

That’s right.

Thanks to John Crouch, that was the first thing that came to mind. (Well, right after “Oh my ... I’m going to be late, and this one-month nuptial is going to go down as the shortest marriage this side of Hollywood.”)

I have frequently heard Mr. Crouch draw parallels between bull selection decisions and route planning on a map. Thus, the reasoning behind my connection of these seemingly unrelated issues.

Before I could figure out how to find Amy in that chaotic shopping mall, I had to determine three things ... in this order:

Where was I?

Where was I going?

And what route was I going to take to get there?

Bull-buying time

Spring is here. Days are getting longer, the ground is getting warmer and calving season is possibly drawing to a close. What else does spring bring to many operations? Bull-selection time.

Where do you want to be with calves sired by the bulls you buy this year? With fluctuating cattle prices, evolving environmental issues, an unstable

economy and numerous other factors bouncing you around, it’s nearly impossible to make this “Where am I going?” decision with exact certainty.

Therefore, this makes the first step of determining where your cow herd is currently, all the more important. So, how is this most effectively achieved?

Individual animal management and a structured system to maintain and analyze your cow herd’s data become *musts* to identify your current position in today’s beef industry.

In a nutshell, this describes the Angus Beef Record Service (BRS). Released in the fall of 2000, the Angus BRS program was created to assist commercial cattlemen in their quests for information regarding end-product merit, feedyard performance, pre- and postweaning gain, cow fertility, and maternal characteristics.

Angus BRS provides a system for commercial producers to keep performance records on their animals, regardless of breed composition. These records can be used as valuable decision-making tools to enhance profitability.

Producers can submit information on their cow herds, including sire information, breeding records, calving and weaning data, and any additional performance or carcass data collected on

Quick facts about Angus BRS

- Cost: \$2/calf weaning weight submitted; this covers all information processing, pre- and postweaning.
- Open to all cow-calf producers; an American Angus Association membership is not required.
- No software application is required; all data entry can be done by Association staff. Internet-based capabilities also are available at www.beefrecords.com.



- Data benchmarked with Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) guidelines.
- Interactive summaries are available online or by phone request.
- Open to all sizes of operations.

their calves. For \$2/calf, this raw data is then converted into more comparative numbers according to Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) guidelines. This information can help producers make selection decisions on their cow herd, while it supplies information to help market the calf progeny as steers and replacement heifers.

The Angus BRS program provides a tool for serious producers who wish to link the end product to the production by identifying genetics that work in their operations. By using individual animal identification (either electronic ID tags or traditional methods), comprehensive report forms, and reports generated by the American Angus Association to evaluate and compare the data, cattle producers can characterize their commercial cow herds and have a higher-quality, more marketable product for their customer.

The process

Angus BRS is structured to be simple to use. But it still is capable of being extremely inclusive, holding detailed information for various traits in the areas of fertility, performance and carcass characteristics. Required information for enrollment includes

- Individual IDs (tag, eID number, etc.) for dam, sire and calf;
- Breed(s) of sire(s);
- Breeding season dates;

- Birth year of cow;
- Birth date of calf; and
- Weaning weight of calf.

In addition, such optional fields as birth weight, electronic ID, hip height, mature weight, cow temperament, body condition scores (BCS), carcass characteristics and numerous other traits allow users to customize the program to fit their management and recordkeeping needs.

Submitting information

Records may be submitted by completing “traditional” paper forms, or by electronically submitting the information. Or, if producers already have their records on a spreadsheet or relational database software application, records can be converted into the Angus BRS database format at no cost. And, with recent enhancements to the Angus BRS Online submission program, users can now enter and retrieve data interactively on the Internet.

Free of charge for Angus BRS customers, Angus BRS Online is becoming a great alternative for producers interested in maintaining sire and cow herd reference data, but uninterested in spending large amounts of money on production management software packages and updates. Because of the speed and relative ease with which modifications can be made to Internet-based applications, producers can have

the luxury of state-of-the-art technologies, without continual investments of time and money on software upgrades.

Getting started

Signing up for Angus BRS is simple. Just call the American Angus Association Angus BRS staff at (816) 383-5100 or visit the Angus BRS Web site (www.beefrecords.com) and fill out a Customer Enrollment form. An Angus BRS Instruction Manual will then be sent with Dam Enrollment Forms to enable you to begin entering data onto this comprehensive program. If you are interested in learning more about Angus BRS, or any American Angus Association program or service for commercial producers, please ask for the Commercial Relations Department when you call.

Choosing your route

Yes, like two separate Dillard’s stores on four different levels, the target for beef producers seems rather vague at times. In addition, the route to get there is seldom a straight line. However, with some simple recordkeeping, you can determine your current position and plot a direction in which to go to achieve your desired destination.

With Angus BRS, we’ll help put the “You are here” sticker on your herd.

