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17TH ANNUAL ANGUS BULL & FEMALE SALE

**MONDAY APRIL 9TH, 2018 • 7:00PM
CHENAULT AGRICULTURE COMPLEX
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TOUR OF DUTY - ABS

VAR DISCOVERY - SELECT SIRE

SAV RESOURCE - GENEX



55

Bulls

40

Registered
Females

35

Commercial
Females

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Rampage - Discovery
Tour of Duty - All In
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Resource - Bismark
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Female Consignors

(all bull consignors plus)

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Circle R Angus
Alex Greiner
Clairbrook

Bull Consignors

Morehead State University
McDonald Angus
Triple C Farms
Ward & Ratliff Cattle Co.
Moss Angus
KW Angus
4th Quarter Ranch

Commercial Females

Steve Vice
Gerald Demoss
T-DCattle Co.
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**Bulls, Fall Bred Heifers and Open Heifers will qualify for
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Excellent genetics, quality and performance at
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Bulls for the West

Arizona and Oregon cattlemen share tips for selecting bulls that work.

Story & photos by
PAIGE NELSON, field editor

The western landscape is as varied as you can find in the United States, and so is the criteria for selecting bulls on western ranches. Each ranch must balance its desired goals with the sometimes-harsh reality of little rainfall. Chuck Backus and Bob Skinner gave tips for selecting bulls to meet western ranch needs in their Cattlemen's College® session at the Cattle Industry Convention hosted in Phoenix, Ariz., Jan. 31.

Backus operates an Arizona ranch that has been in existence for 142 years. That's a long time in Arizona, he said.

"My goal is produce program, high-quality carcass calves," explained Backus. "By program, I mean really anything that they pay a price premium for. If they pay a premium for it, I'll try to match that for my calves."

Backus said the importance of genomics is very high in order to reach his carcass-quality goals.

"My biggest problem is keeping bulls alive," he emphasized. "I have to buy outside bulls, but they don't know what to eat. If they do eat, they get sore because they're walking around on rocks all the time. A bull will just starve to death right beside a big, fat cow."

Backus places high priority on measured characteristics like ultrasound; residual feed intake (RFI), one of the many measures of feed conversion efficiency; and expected progeny differences (EPDs).

"I don't weight visual appearance very much at all. I go over all the numbers, and I rank order them. As a last resort, I go out and look at the bulls. I just make sure they're not pigeon-toed and they have enough muscle to exist in my country."

An additional selection criteria for Backus is calving ease since he can't get to all his cattle during calving season due to terrain and just not being able to find them all.

He also wants bulls that have low milk numbers.

"If the cows are putting all their energy to producing milk for that calf, they'll probably not be in any condition to breed back."

Yearling weight is given priority over weaning weight on Backus's ranch. Above all, Backus said, "I think you should use artificial insemination (AI). You can select the best bulls in the country for your goals, and you don't have to keep them alive. I keep all those bulls in a can in my tack room. I now AI more than 90% of my cow herd."

In the high desert

Skinner, an Oregon rancher, focuses on some similar traits as Backus, but a few others, too. Skinner's is a family-



Chuck Backus (below) and Bob Skinner (above) gave bull selection tips to meet western ranch needs in their Cattlemen's College session.



dependent ranch. He is the fifth generation and is now watching the seventh generation be raised on the ranch.

In Oregon, Skinner faces a high-desert climate with an 11-inch rainfall and 140° temperature swing from summer to winter.

"My sons have the best cheat sheet when they go into a bull sale you've ever seen," said Skinner. "They've got them all arranged on data. They know exactly what they're going to buy."

Skinner and his sons make it a point to check potential bulls for soundness and attitude.

"You get in there and walk around those bulls, and it's amazing what you can breed into those cattle," Skinner observed.

He recalled twice getting phone calls from a feedlot that received his calves and loved the calves' docility.

"We want calm cows. Wild cattle don't make us money," he said.

Skinner AI's 300 first-calf heifers every year. Because he calves both heifers and cows out in large pastures, strong calving-ease bulls are a must.

"We absolutely do not have a problem with pulling calves," he stated.

Editor's Note: Paige Nelson is a freelance writer and cattlemaster from Rigby, Idaho. This article was written as part of Angus Media's coverage of the 2018 Cattle Industry Convention and is copyrighted. See additional coverage distributed through Angus Media channels, including the Angus Journal, Angus Beef Bulletin, Angus Beef Bulletin EXTRA, The Angus Report and online at www.angus.org.