

COMMON GROUND

The cost of a generic Angus bull



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I've spent the last 19 years of my career promoting and marketing a brand — the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand, to be specific. The brand has grown immensely in its 40-plus-year history, and today it enjoys significant equity in the beef marketplace. Consumers and chefs recognize the brand and pay more for it because of its consistent quality. The brand has value.

As CAB has become successful, other brands have emerged using Angus-type cattle, but often with much lower quality specifications — essentially branding the products that fail to meet CAB into another Angus brand. This has created something in the beef trade we at CAB would affectionately call “Angus confusion.”

Angus confusion occurs when consumers or people in the trade are buying what they believe to be a high-quality and predictable product because it has Angus in its name when, in fact, they are buying something

much less. The job of the CAB marketing team is to help everyone understand the superior merits of the CAB brand so they don't fall prey to clever impostors.

Similar impostors

While those efforts have focused on branded-beef products, I would suggest a much-similar Angus confusion is occurring in the seedstock business — specifically with bulls.

“Oh, he's Angus. He's just not registered.”

Over the years, I've heard that comment a lot to describe a black, likely polled, bull bought from a neighbor or at the sale barn. Yet, choosing your next herd sire on the basis of black and polled is likely to cause more indigestion than a disappointing steak. Just as I'd advise you to look for the CAB logo to guarantee a good eating experience, I'll advise you to request the registration paper to ensure you are buying a bull that will live up to your expectations, providing the genetics you need to improve your herd and your bottom line.

Like the window sticker providing the manufacturing details of a pickup truck, that registration paper tells you volumes about how your bull will perform. Just knowing the animal's lineage and pedigree can help avoid inbreeding and potential issues that come with it. You can also see if the bull has been DNA-profiled and whether he has been parentage-verified and tested free of genetic conditions.

Even more valuable are the expected progeny differences (EPDs) and dollar value indexes (\$Values) founded on the largest, most robust genetic database in the beef business. The American Angus Association has always led the way in providing the genetic prediction tools necessary to customer livelihood. The base production EPDs are complemented with cutting-edge EPDs such as foot angle and claw score, heifer pregnancy and docility. Our suite of \$Values is built to help simplify multi-trait selection for commercial cattlemen, yet access to the individual EPDs can help you avoid wrecks in the traits most important to you, such as calving ease, disposition or marbling.

Transferring those papers keeps you current on that bull's genetic merits and gives you access to many services and marketing outlets for your calves through Angus LinkSM and AngusSource[®]. Your bull's EPDs and \$Values are updated weekly and available at any time through www.angus.org.

The proof is in the paper

So, if you're in the market for a new truck, are you going to buy Truck A, supported by a full build sheet, window sticker, warranty, recall notices tied to VIN, etc.? Or, will you choose Truck B, described as black with four wheels? If you want the paperwork to back your pickup purchase, wouldn't you require the same of the bull likely to sire your next three or four calf crops?

While that unregistered, “generic” Angus bull may be a tempting option to save a few dollars, know that decision comes with significant risk and potential hidden costs. Rely on the registration paper to help you navigate one of the most important decisions you make on your operation. **I**

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