

Time to wean, time to take stock



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If calving season is the season of hope and promise, weaning is the season of reality. Two-thirds of our subscribers will weigh up the success of their cow-calf enterprise after weaning and a short preconditioning period. That's according to our most recent readership survey.

A year and a half in the making, the product of all the planning and all the effort to raise a set of calves comes to fruition at weaning. It's time now to market what you have to its best advantage, and to analyze this year's performance to determine if and what changes could improve next year's outcome.

In this summer's *Feeder-Calf Marketing Guide*, we looked at opportunities to enhance the marketing of those calves. That issue considered opportunities from backing them with source, age and sire verification to marketing through a livestock auction or video sale to

choosing a feedyard for retained ownership.

In past issues of the *Angus Beef Bulletin* and our electronic supplement, the *Angus Beef Bulletin EXTRA*, we've covered how to wean — fenceline weaning, nose flaps, pen setup, etc. With this issue, we want to encourage you to take the time to evaluate what worked and what didn't.

Nearly two-thirds (64.5%) of the country's calves are born February-May, according to the National Animal Health Monitoring System's Beef 2017 Study. With an average weaning age of 195.8 days, that puts weaning mid-August and thereafter. It's a busy time, when attentions are split among fall harvest, school activities and securing feedstuffs to winter the herd.

Still, there's no better time to take stock of this year's calf crop and marketing efforts to make improvements for next year. If nothing else, pull out a notebook or make a note in your phone while you are waiting in line at the elevator or waiting to take your child home from a ballgame. Jot down what you could have done to improve this set of calves.

► **Was the time of year right?** Did it match your feed resources? This has certainly been an unusual weather year for much of the country, but unusual can be exaggerations of the norm. At the very least, were there things you should consider to minimize negative ramifications or to capitalize on its bounty next time?

Did your calving season position your calves to enter the market to capture ideal prices? This can sometimes be at odds with matching feed resources, so there are certainly antagonistic forces to balance.

► **Did you perform the health protocols** to prevent sickness and optimize performance? Calf health begins with the health of the dam even before the calf is conceived. Health and vaccination of the cow herd are critical, followed by care and management of the baby calf, and vaccination and management of calves prior to weaning.

How did the actual weaning go? Did calves start on feed and water quickly? If there was any sickness, could it have been avoided?

► **Were the calves genetically ready to perform?** Could you tell differences by sire group or by cow group? Did they have the genetics to attract a buyer at the next level? What changes would make them more appealing? While the AngusLinkSM Genetic Merit ScorecardSM is a useful marketing tool, its feedlot, grid and beef scores provide a benchmark to guide improvement in your herd.

► **Did you take full advantage of the marketing opportunities** available to you as a buyer of registered Angus bulls? We discussed the value of the Association's AngusLink Process Verified Program (PVP) with its available claims in the *Feeder-Calf Marketing Guide* (available online at <https://bit.ly/FCMG2021>).

Time slips away quickly. If we don't take a moment to take stock as we close the books on another calf crop, we may find ourselves losing out on the same opportunities next year. Jot down a few things now and save those observations in a place where you can find them before you head to your next bull sale. |

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