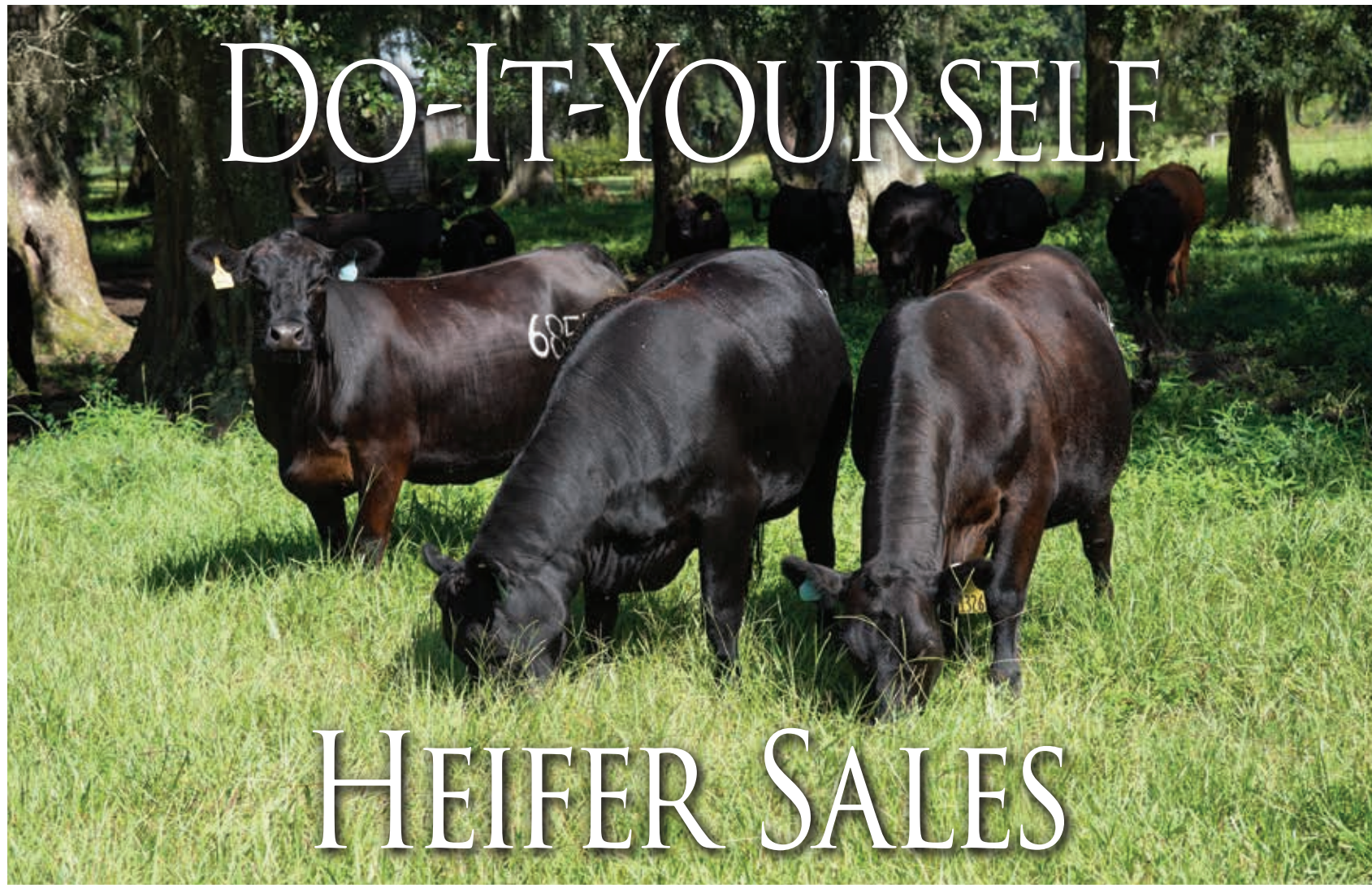


DO-IT-YOURSELF

HEIFER SALES



Planning to sell replacement heifers? Here are tips from those with some experience.

Story & photos by Becky Mills, field editor

The way cattle numbers and the market are shaping up, it looks like a commercial bred heifer is and/or can be a hot commodity. If you're kicking around the idea of hosting your own on-farm sale, capitalize on these tips from two Georgia producers who have learned on the job.

► Plan ahead

It wasn't much of a surprise when Rebecca, Ga., cattleman Phillip Crawford decided to host his own sale.

"An on-farm heifer sale has always been the ultimate goal with my pa and my daddy," says Erica Hasty, Phillip's daughter.

Phillip's late father, Gene, would buy groups of heifers from Florida, develop and breed them, then sell them private treaty or through a video auction.

That evolved with Crawford's own Angus-based herd.

"We were producing a handful of really good heifers," he says. "It was something we felt like we could offer outside our stocker calves and give us a chance to diversify."

July 15 marked Crawford's sixth sale. For Hasty, planning takes the form of records, both for the heifers from their own herd and weaned and preconditioned heifers they buy straight off a ranch.

"We keep vaccine records and

breeding records from the time we get them until sale day," she says.

That includes the dates of both ultrasounds done for pregnancy diagnosis.

For commercial producers Josh and Faye Herring, their son Joshua Herring and daughter Deidre Parramore, planning took the fast track at their Fadeosh Farms.

"In early 2015, John Moseley was here looking at the steers and asked if we ever thought about breeding the heifers and having a sale," Josh Herring explains.

In June of the same year, Parramore left her job as an English teacher and came back to the Boston, Ga., farm. "When Dad mentioned having

Above: Deidre Parramore is a fan of Angus for their own Fadeosh Farms replacement heifers since they sell finished beef.

a sale in August, I was like, 'Next year, that'll be great.'"

Nope, that August. They still managed to pull it off.

"Now, right after the sale, we start planning the next one," says Herring.



Erica Hasty says accurate recordkeeping is the key to an organized commercial heifer sale.

► Name-brand genes

“When I started, I’d try to buy cheaper bulls,” Crawford says. “Not now.”

Not only does he buy top-quality bulls, most from the same supplier, but for three out of six years he also has used artificial insemination (AI) to breed the heifers.

Whether a bull is used naturally or via AI, the sire is a calving-ease Angus, Crawford says. “That’s what our buyers want.”

He goes a step further and selects genetics with a high cow energy value (\$EN), since his customers prefer easy-fleshing cattle. The American Angus Association’s \$EN value index assesses differences in cow energy requirements as an expected dollar savings difference among daughters. A larger value, indicating greater savings on feed energy expenses, is preferred.

While he doesn’t do the auction for the Crawford’s sale, veteran auctioneer Carroll Cannon agrees with the value of AI.

“There is usually a \$100- to \$200-per-head difference between AI-bred and bull-bred,” he explains.

Whether it is AI- or bull-bred, however, “Make sure they are bred to a calving-ease Angus. If you’re using AI, use a proven bull.”

Crawford says he has seen a difference as high as \$500 per head for AI-bred heifers. However, this year, there was no price difference between the 55 AI-bred heifers and the 130 bull-bred heifers.

“It depends on where they are in the sale order,” he explains.

Next year he may start the sale with shorter-bred, bull-bred heifers until the bidding ice is broken.

While they don’t try to AI, Angus bulls are a staple at Fadeosh Farms. Plus, like the Crawfords, most of the heifers they sell



Crawford Cattle Co. sale heifers are penned according to expected calving date, frame size, color and breed type.



Phillip Crawford chats with customer Stuart Griffin at the Crawford Cattle Co. commercial heifer sale.



Crawford Cattle Co. comes alive on sale day.

are heavily Angus-influenced.

“We use Angus on the heifers because we need low birth weights,” says Herring.

He also appreciates their contribution to the operation’s black baldies.

Parramore is a fan of Angus for their own replacement heifers since they sell finished beef.

“In the end, Angus produce quality meat. Our ultimate goal is

to produce food,” she says.

► Get the word out

If you’re putting on a heifer sale, this is not the time to stay out of the spotlight. Both Crawford Cattle Co. and Fadeosh Farms advertise in the *Georgia Cattleman* and the *Florida Cattleman* magazines.

Both Hasty and Parramore post videos of the heifers and sale reminders on Facebook, as well as on their farm websites. They also send flyers to previous buyers, reminding them of their sales and inviting them to return.

Cannon, who serves as

auctioneer for the Fadeosh Farms sale, depends on his wife, Patsie, and her extensive email list, to send out presale email blasts.

► Get professional help

At Crawford Cattle Co., Allen Wiggins and Danny Vickers of Turner County Stockyard use Hasty’s breeding records, as well as their eyes, to group heifers by breed type, frame and calving due date. Hasty records the ear tag numbers before heifers are turned back out for a couple of weeks.

“That’s one thing we changed,” says Crawford. “We try to do the sorting by July 4. We used to do it

“Group the heifers as tightly as you can. Tweak it to get it just right. Don’t group a heifer that is two months bred with one that is eight months bred.” — *Carroll Cannon*

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the week of the sale, but sometimes the heifers didn't settle back down by sale time."

At Fadeosh Farms, the final sort and penning is done Friday afternoon before the Saturday sale. Then, buyers can look at the heifers before sale time.

Using Parramore's records, the preliminary sort is done on paper. Moseley Bros. Cattle, consisting of John Moseley's sons Trip, Joey and Will, along with their father, manage the Fadeosh sale. Trip and Parramore go over the calving dates, breed type and frame size. Then they send the numbers to the barn, where Joshua Herring and Joey Moseley do the final sort and actual penning.

Careful sorting is key, especially when it comes to calving dates, Cannon says. "Group the heifers as tightly as you can. Tweak it to get it just right. Don't group a heifer that is two months bred with one that is eight months bred."

Parramore says they try for a within-pen calving spread of only two or three weeks, but 60 days is the maximum for the 125 or so heifers they sell each year.

She quotes Joshua as saying, "Pretty sells."



Allen Wiggins of Turner County Stockyards acts as sale auctioneer at Crawford Cattle Co.



Danny Vickers of Turner County Stockyard helps sort the heifers before the Crawford Cattle Co. heifer sale and helps on sale day.

To that end, not only are the Fadeosh heifers slick from good nutrition, Parramore and her father get them up the week before the sale and clip their tails and ears and put in new ear tags. They do the freeze brands earlier in the summer.

They also make sure the former "horse barn turned sale facility" is freshly bedded with peanut hulls.



Jet Wilson and Kenny Sikes, Ivey's Outdoor and Farm Supply, cook hamburgers while Steven Mathis of BigIron takes time for lunch.

Parramore also firmly believes in "pretty is as pretty does."

"We like our cattle to have good dispositions," she says. "Through genetic testing and frequent handling, we try to identify cattle with aggressive behavior and cull them. We are not training to be rodeo clowns around here."

► **Fill 'em up**

The Crawfords and the Fadeosh Farms crew make sure buyers are well-fed. Kenny Sikes of Ivey's Outdoors enlists the aid of his employees and grandchildren to grill

and serve Crawford-raised burgers at the Crawford Sale. At Fadeosh Farms, more than 100 potential buyers feast on home-grown brisket and Mrs. Faye's homemade slaw and pound cake.

► **All hands on deck**

On sale day, everybody has a job. At Fadeosh Farms, Will Moseley joins Joey and Trip and handles the auction paperwork. Patsie Cannon proofs the pen and heifer numbers and the sale order. After the sale the Moseleys load out the heifers.

At the Crawford's sale, Hasty

states, "Organization. We all have our part, and it helps make things flow."

Hasty's brothers, Tanner and Chandler, pen the heifers the morning of the sale, then Chandler and Phillip visit with buyers.

Tanner and his wife, Kylie, are the tech people and make sure the television and sound system work. Kylie also edits presale videos and helps Hasty register buyers. Melissa, Phillip's wife, clerks the sale with Hasty. After the sale, Tanner and Chandler load out the heifers.

For the first three years, Wiggins and Vickers managed the sale. However, Wiggins told Crawford they were capable of managing it themselves. Wiggins still is the auctioneer, but other than that and presale sorting, the Crawfords have taken over the rest of the sale duties.

"We couldn't do it without our kids," says Crawford.

► **Stand by your word**

The end of the sale isn't the end of customer service. Cannon recommends taking a page from the playbook of reputable purebred breeders. If there is a problem with a heifer, he says, make it right.

"Follow up after the sale," he adds, "and treat folks like you want to be treated."

► **Ask for help**

There is one more job the Crawfords do prior to, during and after the sale.

Says Phillip: "This family prays a lot." ■

Editor's note: Becky Mills is a freelance writer and cattlewoman from Cuthbert, Ga.



Daughter-father team Deidre Parramore and Josh Herring spend the week before their commercial heifer sale trimming the tails and ears on the heifers.

More marketing resources

To learn more from these sources about marketing, visit their websites:

- Crawford Cattle Co., www.crawfordcattle.com
- Fadeosh Farms, www.fadeoshfarms.com
- Moseley Bros. Cattle, www.moseleybrotherscattle.com
- Turner County Stockyard, www.turnercountystockyard.com