Rebuild right.

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Any good project starts with a plan. Without it, you can veer off course, missing opportunities and costing yourself valuable time and resources. But a well-thought-out strategy can give you a head start.

The U.S. beef cow herd has been declining since 2019 and is projected to hit the cycle low in 2025. Tight supplies have supported high feeder-calf prices and bolstered profitability back at the ranch. The *Industry Insights* survey powered by Angus Media and CattleFax last fall identified that more than 40% of cow-calf producers intend to increase their herd size in the next three years. When Mother Nature cooperates there's no doubt we will enter into an expansion phase with more heifers held back into the herd.

Do you have a plan to rebuild right?

First things first

The last major herd rebuilding took place following the multiyear drought plaguing much of cow country from 2011 to 2014. From 2014 to 2019, cattlemen grew the U.S. cow herd by more than 2.5 million females. Through a roughly 10-year period, some of the oldest genetics were liquidated and new, fresh genetics were retained.

This genetic turnover of about 5 million cows significantly improved the overall quality of our nation's beef herd. That same genetic turnover is happening again, and producers need to be sure they are rebuilding with a genetic plan to keep their competitive advantage.

The Angus cow has been the backbone of the beef industry for decades. Today more than 80% of the cow herd is Angus-based. The Angus cow checks so many boxes for profitable beef production — fertility, calving ease, good mothering ability, adaptability to different environments and management systems, and the ability to wean a highly marketable, heavy calf. Identifying the Angus breed as a starting place is step one.

Dialing it down

After that, it becomes about finding the Angus genetics that make the most ideal females for your environment while not ignoring the value of their steer mates. I always encourage commercial cattlemen to visit with their seedstock provider to outline goals and refine the need beyond the breed.

There is incredible diversity in the Angus breed today. An industry-leading database and expected progeny differences (EPDs) offered by the American Angus Association can help you find just the right balance of maternal and terminal traits for your outfit. Also, if you are in the market for an Angus bull, check out the *www.angus.org* website and the hundreds of bull sale books available to shop through.

Within-herd selection

Once you have a group of replacement heifer candidates on the ground, the challenge is then to keep the right ones back. In most cases, identifying replacements sooner and not investing in developing females that won't make the cut is the best economic decision. While genomic-testing young calves is commonplace in the seedstock industry, it is growing in popularity for commercial ranchers, too. The GeneMax® Advantage™ test available through Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI) puts cutting-edge technology and invaluable information in your hands to make better decisions.

The GeneMax Advantage genomic test provides you with a profile of traits and will soon include the same dollar value indexes available on registered Angus cattle. This insight allows you to keep back those females that best fit your goals and the direction you are working to take your herd — whether that's moderating cow size, increasing weaning weight or improving quality grade. Maybe one of the most valuable pieces of information you can get by testing is identifying the heifer's sire. Being able to group sires and avoid inbreeding can pay real dividends.

You wouldn't consider building a house without a blueprint, so it only makes sense that you should approach growing your herd with a well-designed plan. The Angus breed offers tremendous diversity and value to be the genetic component of your plan. ABB

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Industry Insights powered by Angus Media and CattleFax.

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