The Angus Link Bull selection

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Selecting bulls for breeding season can be both exciting and stressful. While looking through sale books at various pedigrees, performance records and photographs, cattlemen begin to analyze which bulls will work in their operation and which bulls will meet their goals relative to positive directional change.

When evaluating bulls for traits other than phenotype, expected progeny differences (EPDs) become a valuable asset. Selection decisions can now be made using EPDs to compare bulls on various traits.

The way a producer markets calves in terms of selling calves at weaning vs. retaining ownership will have a big effect on the traits that should have the most emphasis. After evaluating a bull for his various traits, one can then begin to formulate his value.

Matching EPDs to cow herd

When selecting bulls to mate to first-calf heifers rather than cows, emphasize birth weight (BW) and calving ease direct (CED). CED is expressed as a difference in percentage of unassisted births, with a higher value indicating greater calving ease in first-calf heifers. It predicts the average difference in ease with which a sire's calves will be born when he is bred to first-calf heifers. This allows producers to avoid high birth weights and assisted births of calves.

The difference lies in the goals of an operation and the genetic trend that the producer would like to make in the cow herd.

Sire selection for an operation that will market calves at weaning will emphasize EPDs that focus on growth. For example, a bull's weaning weight EPD (WW EPD) would be important to this operation.

For emphasis on more preweaning performance traits, the weaned calf value index, $W, can be used. $W incorporates EPDs and economic assumptions for weaning growth, calving ease, maternal performance (weaning weight and milk) and mature size.

When making genetic selection decisions for an operation that may retain ownership through the feedlot phase, dollar value indexes ($Values) for feedlot value ($F), grid value ($G) and beef value ($B) are helpful resources. These indexes are multi-trait selection indexes, expressed in dollars per head, to assist beef producers by adding simplicity to selecting sires on multiple postweaning and carcass traits.

If a producer is choosing a terminal sire and will not keep females for replacements, focusing on these terminal $Values, which don't take maternal traits into consideration, may make sense.

For more information on EPDs and $Values, visit *www.angussiresearch.com.*