

The Source: Begin with an end in mind

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As I write this, it's the time of year hunters dream about — deer season. My 14-year-old son caught the deer fever early this year. He was determined to find

a large set of antlers to hang on the wall. He began developing his hunting strategy last summer by attending seminars, learning from conservation agents and visiting with neighbors to plan for the “big weekend.”

He had a vision, but, more important-

ly, he had a plan. And it paid off well for him when he brought home an 11-point buck. He began with an end in mind.

The same principles hold true for managing your herd. We all have a vision for a profitable operation that will sustain itself over the years. But just like on the

deer hunt, a vision is worthless without a plan.

Your herd begins with bull selections, cow purchases and the breeding season. But even before you buy that first bull or cow, do your homework and have a plan in mind. By answering a few basic questions, you will be ahead in the marketplace.

How do you want to market those calves? Do you want to develop and sell replacement females? Are you going to sell your calves at the local auction, or do you want to retain ownership and feed out some of the calves?

One decision that you can make confidently is adding Angus genetics to your herd. A recent study showed that Angus, black and black-baldie calves resulted in some of the highest premiums paid over a seven-year period.

Buyers are looking for black-hided calves, no matter if they are replacement females or feeders. Go to the sale barn or watch a video sale, and you will see that black is the dominant color passing through the ring. The real question is: Do those black-hided calves have Angus-based genetics?

If you enroll your calves in AngusSource[®], there is no question. The USDA process-verified program (PVP) not only documents and verifies the group age and source of your hard work, but it also guarantees to buyers that calves are at least 50% Angus.

That high-quality reputation means higher premiums for you.

Let's look at replacement heifers. Raising and developing replacement heifers requires a marketing plan, and, for some producers, it is an excellent way to add value to their operation. Enrolling your quality replacement heifers in AngusSource can potentially add more value to those heifers.

You can list your AngusSource-enrolled replacement heifers on the online sale listing from the ranch, from an auction barn or a video auction. It's totally up to you how you market those calves.

Plus, you can also document vaccinations and breeding information for those replacement heifers. There is a bucket full of other data you can add to the AngusSource customized marketing document. You can use the online marketing tool on the AngusSource website, www.angus.org/AngusSource, for no additional cost.

Focus on the type of animals you want to raise and the goal you want to meet. Do your homework, and know what the market demand looks like and how it might change in the future. Research options, like AngusSource, that will make your operation more efficient and profitable.

Patience and planning are key in successful hunts and cattle programs alike. You need to know where you're going before you get there; begin with an end in mind.

