



# The Source

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## Listening to commercial cattlemen

Earlier this year producers had the opportunity to respond to a survey in the *Angus Beef Bulletin*. There were a variety of questions and answers from the more than 250 producers who responded to the survey. I have pulled out the highlights to share here. It doesn't matter if you are a commercial or a seedstock producer, I believe this small snapshot of information can give you an idea of what cattle producers who read the *Angus Beef Bulletin* think.

More than 90% of the producers who submitted their comments were commercial cattlemen, with 33% being younger than age 35. Producers in the 35-50 age range were fewer in number at just 27%, while producers 51 and older accounted for 35% of the responses.

Approximately 27% of the commercial producers reported they managed 35 commercial females or fewer, while 12%

of the producers said their herd size was between 35 and 49 head. Seventeen percent of the producers reported having 50-99 females, and 20% reported having 100-249 females. The last three size groups made up 18% of the total producers, with 13.5% reporting 250-499 females, 4.1% reporting 500-999 females and 0.4% having more than 1,000 head.

### Survey responses show exciting opportunities for all Angus cattlemen.

Producers in this survey said they purchased an average of 2.1 bulls per year. These cattlemen choose to personally buy bulls from three locations: seedstock producer's auction (61.7%) followed closely by private treaty (54.4%) and finally at a performance-tested bull sale (14.6%).

What breed has the most influence in their cow herds? While Angus was to be expected from readers of the *Angus Beef Bulletin*, more than 78% of the commercial cow herds were influenced heavily by the Angus breed. Additionally,

73% of the producers said they used only Angus bulls in their operation.

How does a commercial cattleman decide which bull to bring home? Fig. 1 shows the factors that affect the bull-buying decisions of the respondents, with higher numbers indicating a higher rank in priority.

One trend I get excited about is increased docility. These data show how much emphasis potential buyers are placing on quiet, calm cattle.

More than 70% of the respondents felt it was at least somewhat important to have genomic test information on the bull they were considering for purchase.

### Marketing tendencies

Commercial producers invest a great deal of time and money in their breeding decisions. How do they market their calves once they are weaned off the cow? The survey responses show producers used more than one method to market their calves. The local auction market was the top choice for two-thirds of the producers going down this road. Private-treaty sales were used by half of the producers, with retained ownership being used by only one-quarter of the respondents.

AngusSource® is a marketing program operated by the American Angus Association for producers who want to enroll their commercial feeder calves and replacement females in a USDA Processed Verified Program that documents source, group age and a minimum of 50% Angus genetics. More than 55% of the respondents felt AngusSource was a valuable marketing tool for commercial producers who want to document the genetic value of their calves at marketing.

What do you value most from your seedstock provider? That question also produced some interesting feedback. See Fig. 2 for the rankings of the answers. Again, higher numbers correspond with higher priority.

Genetics obviously play an important role, but customer service is another important factor buyers are looking for when choosing where to make their purchases. As the younger generations have more purchasing power, I believe customer service will continue to become more of a factor in the buying decision.

### Final thoughts

Overall, I found it interesting the amount of Angus influence in our commercial herds. Plus, more than 40% say they utilize artificial insemination (AI) on their entire herd one time before turning out the clean-up bull, while 24% AI only the first-calf heifers.

**Fig. 1: Factors that affect bull-buying decisions**

Factor	Weight of ranking
Breed of the bull	5.77
EPDs of the bull	5.28
Bull's temperament	5.31
Phenotype/visual	5.12
Actual performance	5.03
Past experience with the breeder	4.88
Producer selling bull	4.72
Past experience with the bloodline	4.72
Sire of the bull	4.71
Dam of the bull	4.42
\$Values of the bull	4.57
Price of the bull	4.02
Location of breeder	3.66
Referral	3.47

**Fig. 2: What commercial producers value most in seedstock providers**

Factor	Weight of ranking
Genetics	5.50
Service after the sale	4.95
Guarantees provided	4.86
Friendship	4.55
Advice on genetics	4.43
Perspective on industry	4.42
Location	4.25
Advice on herd health	3.90
Advice on cow herd management	3.79
Marketing options provided	3.63
Advice on marketing	3.48
Partnerships provided	3.17

The number of people who want a genomic test on their potential bull purchases (70%) was exciting. Commercial Angus producers continue to be some of the most progressive breeders in the beef industry, and these numbers validate that fact. The American Angus Association is thankful to the seedstock and commercial producers who utilize the tools provided to make Angus the Business Breed.

**Editor's Note:** *Ginette Gottswiller is the director of commercial programs for the American Angus Association.*

