

SORTING GATE

Tools for 'hiring' the right bull

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Every employer knows the value of a great employee and the costs associated with a bad one. Likewise,

cow-calf producers are familiar with the potential benefits and costs associated with sire selection. Mistakes will not only be seen when the progeny of a poorly chosen sire are marketed, but may be witnessed for years to come in operations that retain replacement females. For this reason, producers should utilize every tool available to minimize the chance of making a mistake.

To help ensure success in the employee hiring process, a standard set of tools has been developed to screen and select from the most qualified candidates. Among these

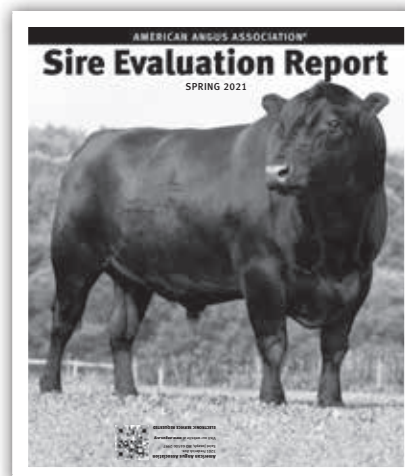
are position descriptions, résumés, interviews and reference checks. A similar set of tools can be utilized in sire selection.

Position descriptions

Any successful employment search begins with an accurate description of the position to be filled. This includes details on the duties to be performed, along with the required qualifications, skills and abilities. As it pertains to sire selection, the position description is defined by the production environment and marketing system that the bull and its progeny must function within.

The definition of a production environment will include feed resources, which dictate the optimum mature cow size and level of milk production, and may include factors such as the availability of labor at calving, the age and size of females to be bred, geographical terrain, temperature and altitude.

Marketing systems will generally



be defined by when, how and to whom offspring are sold; however, they can also include the internal marketing associated with retaining animals within the herd.

As it pertains to cattle production, the position description will define which traits to emphasize and at what levels. To assist, common production scenarios are defined by Angus dollar value indexes (\$Values; see Table 1). By encompassing the revenue generated from genetically derived

outputs and the associated expense of required inputs, \$Values are tools that allow producers whose operations are generally defined by the underlying scenario of an index to increase profitability through simultaneous selection for multiple traits.

Though the scenarios underlying these \$Values are generalizations and should be supplemented with additional details, they provide an operation that fits the general assumptions a means by which to sort sires on potential profitability. Once animals have been sorted on the \$Value that best fits the operation, selection for individual component traits can be further refined, and traits that are not incorporated in the \$Value can be considered.

Résumés

The most effective tool for screening applicants when hiring a new employee is the résumé. By reviewing a pool of résumés, the applicants who appear to meet the requisite skills and qualifications outlined in the position description can be identified for further consideration.

Because expected progeny differences (EPDs) are the best prediction of the future performance of an animal's offspring for economically important traits, they form the basis of a potential sire's résumé. However, other measures, such as a breeding soundness examination (sometimes referred to as a BSE), should also be considered part of the résumé.

Backed by the largest performance and genomic database in the beef industry, the *American Angus Association Sire Evaluation Report*, which is published twice a year, lists the résumés of thousands

TOOLS TO GENETIC PREDICTIONS SUCCEED

Table 1: Description of American Angus Association dollar value indexes (\$Values)

\$Value	General position description	EPDs included
Maternal weaned calf value (\$M)	Assumes a self-replacing herd model where 25% of breeding females are replaced in the first generation and 20% are replaced in subsequent generations. Remaining cull females and all male progeny are sold as feeder calves. \$M is expressed in dollars per head and predicts average profitability differences in progeny due to genetics from conception to weaning.	Calving ease direct and maternal, weaning weight, maternal milk, heifer pregnancy, docility, mature weight, foot angle and claw set.
Beef value (\$B)	Assumes all male and female progeny are retained through the feedlot phase and marketed on a quality-based carcass grid. A terminal index, \$B is expressed in dollars per carcass and predicts average profitability differences in progeny due to postweaning performance and carcass value.	Postweaning gain (difference between yearling and weaning weight), dry-matter intake, carcass weight, marbling, ribeye area and fat.
Combined value (\$C)	Assumes a 500-head commercial cow herd that replaces 25% of its breeding females per year with replacement heifers in the first generation and 20% per year thereafter. Cull heifers and steer mates are retained through the feedlot and marketed on a quality-based carcass merit grid. Expressed in average expected dollars per head.	All traits included in \$M and \$B.

SOURCE: American Angus Association, 2021.

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of Angus sires. From a total of 289,145 sires that had progeny records in the Angus database as of Dec. 4, 2020, the *Spring 2021 Sire Evaluation Report* lists 2,251 sires that had at least 35 yearling progeny weights from proper contemporary groups, a minimum yearling weight accuracy of 0.40, and at least five calves recorded in the American Angus Association Herd Book since Jan. 1, 2019.

The report's "Young Sire Supplement" section lists an additional 2,182 bulls born after Jan. 1, 2017, that have a minimum of 10 progeny weaning weights and a weaning weight accuracy of at least 0.30.

Though the printed version of the *Sire Evaluation Report* allows the résumés of thousands of sires to be reviewed through an alphabetical listing, it does not provide an easy means to sort or compare sires for a specific purpose.

Much like the résumé search

Fig. 1: The online version of the *Sire Evaluation Report* is updated weekly and located under the "Management" tab at www.angus.org



Selecting a sire is a lot like hiring a new employee. Mistakes can be costly, so it's important to use every tool available.

functions found on leading employment websites, the online version of the *Sire Evaluation Report*, which is updated weekly and located under the "Management" tab at www.angus.org, includes a search function of its own (see Fig. 1). In addition to allowing up to 12 specific sires to be compared in the same output, users have the option

to set minimum and maximum EPD values and minimum accuracies for 21 traits and seven \$Values to generate a complete report

of sires meeting the search criteria (see Fig. 2, page 38). Additionally, users can generate a listing of all sons of a specific sire that meet a given search criteria.

The *Sire Evaluation Report* serves as a valuable reference, with descriptions of EPDs and \$Values, breed average EPDs, and percentile tables for different classifications of

cattle (current sires, current dams, non-parent bulls, non-parent cows). Percentile tables allow producers to determine where an individual animal ranks among its contemporaries within the Angus breed for each EPD or \$Value.

For producers who purchase bulls through production sales, it is important to note that Angus breeders have the option of incorporating the search functions of the online *Sire Evaluation Report* in their digital sale books. To view

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Fig. 2: Within the online Sire Summary Search, users have the option to set minimum and maximum EPD values and minimum accuracies for 21 traits and seven \$Values to generate a report of sires meeting the search criteria

SIRE SUMMARY SEARCH CRITERIA
 Spring 2021
 You may not without the prior written permission of the American Angus Association use any computer code, data-mining software, "robot," "bot," "spider," "scraper" or other automatic device, program, algorithm or methodology having similar processes or functionality, or any manual process, to monitor or copy in bulk the data or content found on this site or accessed through this site.
 Disclaimer - Please read before continuing.
 Sire Evaluation Report - Complete documentation, tables and charts from the latest Sire Evaluation.
 Select the radio button next to desired epd trait to sort by that trait.
 Click here for instructions.

Production	Valid Range	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum Accuracy .00 to .99
<input type="radio"/> Calving Ease Direct	-18 to 24	Min CED	Max CED	Min Acc CED
<input type="radio"/> Birth Weight	-9.2 to 8.2	Min BW	Max BW	Min Acc BW
<input type="radio"/> Weaning Weight	-12 to 113	Min WW	Max WW	Min Acc WW
<input type="radio"/> Yearling Weight	-12 to 192	Min YW	Max YW	Min Acc YW
<input type="radio"/> Residual Average Daily Gain	0.00 to 0.41	Min RADG	Max RADG	Min Acc RAD
<input type="radio"/> Dry Matter Intake	-2.05 to 2.86	Min DMI	Max DMI	Min Acc DMI
<input type="radio"/> Yearling Height	-1.4 to 1.9	Min YH	Max YH	Min Acc YH
<input type="radio"/> Scrotal Circum.	+1.24 to 2.97	Min SC	Max SC	Min Acc SC
<input type="radio"/> Docility	-24 to 41	Min Doc	Max Doc	Min Acc Doc
<input type="radio"/> Foot Claw Set	0.17 to 1.03	Min Claw Set	Max Claw Set	Min Acc Claw
<input type="radio"/> Foot Angle	0.17 to 1.12	Min Angle	Max Angle	Min Acc Angl
<input type="radio"/> PAP	-2.99 to 7.62	Min Pap	Max Pap	Min Acc Pap
Maternal				
<input type="radio"/> Heifer Pregnancy	-0.4 to 22.4	Min HP	Max HP	Min Acc HP
<input type="radio"/> Calving Ease Maternal	-22 to 21	Min CEM	Max CEM	Min Acc CEM
<input type="radio"/> Milk	-5 to 45	Min Milk	Max Milk	Min Acc Milk
<input type="radio"/> Mature Weight	-54 to 194	Min MW	Max MW	Min Acc MW
<input type="radio"/> Mature Height	-1.7 to 2.0	Min MH	Max MH	Min Acc MH
<input type="radio"/> Cow Energy (\$EN)	-80 to 34	Min \$EN	Max \$EN	
Carcass				
<input type="radio"/> Carcass Weight	-35 to 101	Min CW	Max CW	Min Acc CW
<input type="radio"/> Marbling	-0.54 to 1.88	Min MarB	Max MarB	Min Acc MarB
<input type="radio"/> Ribeye Area	-0.43 to 1.74	Min RE	Max RE	Min Acc RE
<input type="radio"/> Fat	-0.083 to 0.121	Min Fat	Max Fat	Min Acc Fat
\$Values				
<input type="radio"/> Maternal Value (\$M)	-22 to 109	Min \$M	Max \$M	
<input type="radio"/> Wean Value (\$W)	-47 to 111	Min \$W	Max \$W	
<input type="radio"/> Feedlot Value (\$F)	-6 to 158	Min \$F	Max \$F	
<input type="radio"/> Grid Value (\$G)	-7 to 110	Min \$G	Max \$G	
<input type="radio"/> Beef Value (\$B)	8 to 231	Min \$B	Max \$B	
<input type="radio"/> Combined Index (\$C)	28 to 363	Min \$C	Max \$C	
<input type="radio"/> Birth Year	1963 to 2018	Min Birth Yr	Max Birth Yr	
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Animal Name	Animal Name	Can be partial name.		
Sire's Sire Reg Num	Sire's Sire Reg Num	Returns sons of sire requested		
Enter sire reg numbers to search for specific sires. (Overrides search criteria)				
Reg Num	Reg Num	Reg Num	Reg Num	
Reg Num	Reg Num	Reg Num	Reg Num	
Reg Num	Reg Num	Reg Num	Reg Num	
Import a file of registration numbers. (Overrides search criteria)				
Choose File	No file chosen	.txt and .xls files only;		

Search Clear

the sale books of upcoming Angus sales, visit www.angus.org/AngusProductions/SaleBooks.aspx (see Fig. 3).

producers, regional managers or extension personnel — may also assist with creating and refining the position description.

Interviews and reference checks

Though a potential employee may appear to fit on paper, most employers prefer to conduct interviews and reference checks to further ensure a good fit. Likewise, a potential sire's EPD and phenotypic data should be supplemented by additional information to avoid any unwanted surprises.

When selecting a natural-service sire, a visual evaluation for traits such as structural soundness, body volume, muscularity and disposition can be thought of as an interview. In instances where a potential artificial insemination (AI) or natural-service sire is not available for a visual evaluation, the opinions of trusted sources serve as a reference check. These trusted sources — which may include reputable purebred breeders, knowledgeable commercial

Making a good hire

By exercising due diligence and using all available tools, employers can greatly increase the probability of success through the hiring process and avoid the negative consequences of onboarding an employee who is not a good fit. The same can be said for bull buyers. With an accurate position description in hand, résumés can be screened to determine the candidates that appear to have the requisite abilities and qualifications. Following interviews and reference checks, it then comes down to budget. |

Editor's note: "Sorting Gate" is a regular *Angus Beef Bulletin* column featuring herd improvement topics for commercial producers using Angus genetics. Authored by staff of Angus Genetics Inc. (AGI), regular contributors include Joel Cowley, president; and Kelli Retallick, director of genetic and genomic services. For additional information on performance programs available through the American Angus Association and AGI, visit www.angus.org and select topics under the "Management" tab.

Fig. 3: Angus breeders can incorporate the search functions of the online Sire Evaluation Report in digital sale books available at www.angus.org/AngusProductions/SaleBooks.aspx

The screenshot shows the 'Sale Books' section of the Angus website. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Member Services', 'Management', 'Marketing', 'Commercial', 'News', 'Events', 'Shop', and 'About'. Below this, there are search filters: 'Select State' (dropdown), 'Alphabetical Listing' (dropdown), 'Has Videos' (checkbox), and 'Search' and 'Clear' buttons. A 'ListView' link is also present. Three sale book covers are featured: 'Bases Loaded' (01/06/21) from Oklahoma City, OK; 'Denim & Diamonds' (01/07/21) from Oklahoma City, OK; and 'Angus Foundation Female Sale' (01/08/21) from Oklahoma City, OK.