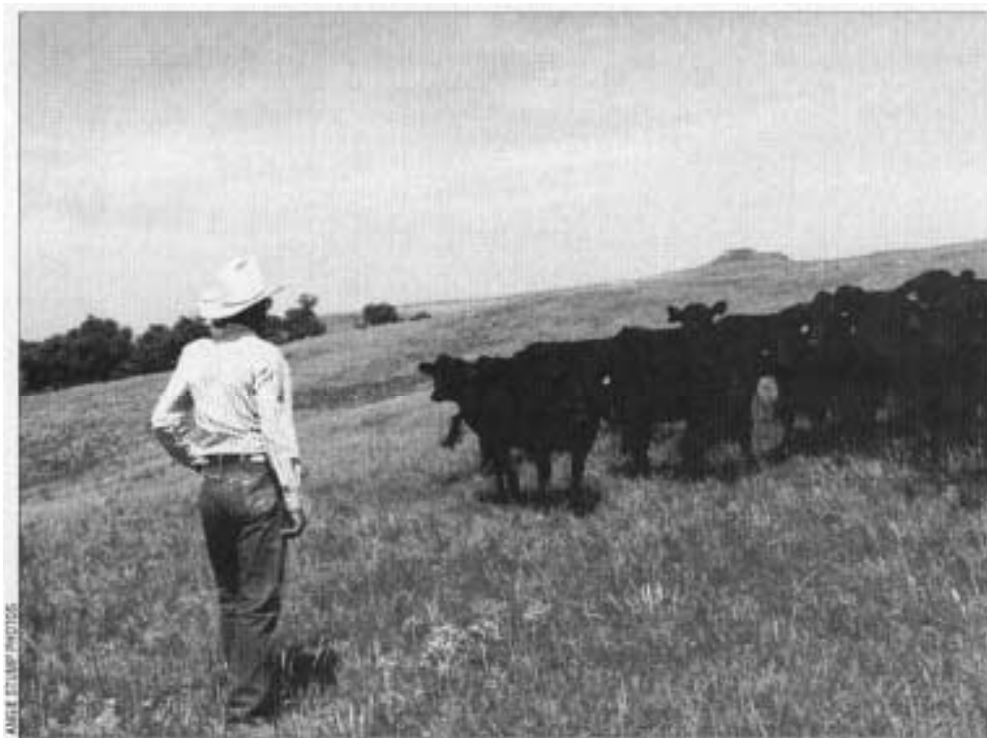


# BOTTOMLINE EFFICIENCY

*Angus cattle work for South Dakota commercial cattle producers Bruce and Lynn Hall.*

BY ANGIE STUMP



*Mother nature takes care of these cattle. Bruce Hall doesn't supplement or pamper his cattle. He selects for the highest performing cows which will produce with little supplements and a short-breeding season.*

Partners in marriage and on the farm, Bruce and Lynn Hall strive to keep ranching expenses down to efficiently compete in the beef industry.

The keys to efficiency are providing your own labor and having efficient cows, Bruce says. Today Bruce, Lynn and their son, Chancey, provide most of the ranch labor.

"She is as a full-time partner as you can get," Bruce says about Lynn. "I get a lot of work out of my wife, probably more than I should."

Lynn helps with the everyday chores of the ranch. "I am the hired hand," Lynn says. "I am outside as much as I am inside."

The efficient cattle they use are Angus and Angus x Hereford.

Boyd Hall, Bruce's grandfather, started the ranch in 1933, near Meadow, S.D. Bruce and Lynn became partners with Kirk, Bruce's dad, in 1976 and became managers after Kirk died in 1987.

The ranch consists of

13,500 acres, half owned and half leased, of fairly rough country in the northwest part of the state. Their cattle graze on native grassland and have brushy creeks and draws for winter shelter.

To keep feed costs low they try to utilize all of their natural assets and graze their cattle as much as possible, using no creep feed. They supplement the cows during their last trimester of pregnancy.

Fitting the criteria to efficiently produce on the Hall

Ranch are Angus cattle. They started using Angus as a calving ease alternative. "We think they are easy fleshing and moderate framed so they can make their own living," Bruce says. "They work for us."

The Halls' cow herd is black and black-baldies with 330 mother cows and 140 yearling heifers. "Dad was an outstanding cowman," Bruce says. "Therefore, we had a good herd to carry on with. We do our best to run a progressive cow outfit."

Bruce's dad started using artificial insemination (AI) in 1963. They are using only Angus bulls in their AI program today.

To be competitive the Halls realize the need to serve the demand. "I like straight Angus, but a lot of producers want baldies," Bruce said. To fit the demand they do use Hereford and Angus bulls for clean up.

"Using AI has been our key to making a living while our neighbors have had a hard time," Bruce says. "It is a program to get started with," he explains, "and once into it, it is rewarding to see those heifers standing around."

He adds that cattle producers have to keep with it and retain offspring. "If you keep saving replacement heifers it will keep growing and you will get a better cow herd," he says.

The Halls use a short, 45-day breeding season to decrease management and improve fertility in the herd. Bruce says about 4 percent of their herd will be open after the short season. They cull those cows and heifers that are open after the breeding season.

"Having a good cow which will produce a big calf every year and breed back is efficiency," Bruce says.

Their hard work has paid off. The Halls were awarded South Dakota's Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Commercial Cattle

Producer award in 1993. Joe Deans, distributor for Select Sires, Keldron, S.D., nominated the Halls.

"They have done an excellent job with their herd," Joe says. "They are using production testing, AI and superior genetics in a very efficient program having low-input costs."

The Halls select cattle that will thrive in the rough country of South Dakota. "We raise the best doing cattle possible, breeding strongly for maternal traits, easy fleshing and moderate framed," Bruce says. In the last 10 years they have increased average calf weights 25 percent and cow weights five percent.

Artificial insemination gives the Halls the opportunity to use some of the best bulls in the nation. "It makes sense to AI your cows to the bull with the genetics you want instead of going out and buying a son of that bull and being a generation away from those genetics," Bruce says.

The use of AI has increased the value of Halls' offspring. Their marketing system involves selling steers in the fall and keeping replacement females. They breed the replacements in the summer and sell half of them in November as bred heifers. The bred heifers are always sold for record-top prices at Faith, S.D., Joe says.

Their reputation as progressive cattle producers has increased the demand of their cattle. They sell bulls and replacement females to their neighbors. Although they have the demand for bulls, they sell very few. The bulls they do sell are sold private treaty.

When the Halls' neighbors were purchasing exotics, Bruce and Lynn continued to use Angus and Herefords. "It worked out well because our neighbors looked to us for replacements."

Every fall the Halls sell their steers. This year a neighbor finished their cattle.



## South Dakota Beef Cow Herd Analysis — 1993

Critical Success Factors	Hall Ranch Performance	Avg. Herd Performance
<b>Cow Reproduction</b>		
Pregnancy	93.2%	93.1%
CalvingRate	92.3%	92.9%
Calfcrop(weaned)	90.4%	91.2%
<b>Calving Season Distribution</b>		
Calves born during first 21 days	87.3%	50.8%
Calves born during first 42 days	99.7%	84.0%
Calves born during first 63 days	100 %	94.7%
<b>Calf Performance</b>		
Birth weight	80 lb.	83 lb.
Adj. 205-dayweight	634 lb.	590 lb.
Average age atweaning	188days	196days
Actual weaning weight		
Steers	562 lb.	566 lb.
Heifers	548 lb.	538 lb.
Bulls	615 lb.	584 lb.
WDA	2.98 lb.	2.78 lb.
ADG	2.60 lb.	2.36 lb.

\*Majority of Hall Ranch's 1993 calf crop was Angus sired Theyreceived no creep feed

SOURCE: South Dakota State University CHAPS program

"We've talked about retaining ownership," Bruce says, "but Lynn is not in favor of it. If we are going to be in a wreck, we both need to be on the same side of the fence."

They try but are not always successful in collecting data on their calves.

They enter the data into their computer and generate performance figures and comparisons using the North Dakota State University CHAPS program. Bruce and Lynn have been using the CHAPS program for five years.

It is important to select high performing cattle, but to make a profit in the beef industry cattle producers must care for the livestock and the land they graze. The

Halls have worked to incorporate conservation practices on their ranch. To improve water supplies they have done pipeline work, directing water to various locations in the pasture. With this practice cows can scatter out instead of concentrating in a certain area.

Using pasture rotation the Halls found they wean heavier calves.

"We wean heavier calves off grass than our neighbors do supplementing with creep feed," he says.

Those calves are the Halls' only crop. "Everything we raise go into the cattle," Bruce says. They do plant some millet or oats in an alfalfa rotation.

Keeping feed and labor

costs down is the Halls' formula to getting a positive return from their cattle. "Feed costs make a difference between the high-cost and low-cost producer," Bruce says. "We try to keep the costs down."

"I admire and respect the progress they have made," Joe says. "I can't say enough good things about them."

The Halls goal is to keep their cows maternal and easy fleshing so they can make their own living as well Bruce and Lynn's. "In a few years we'd like to get a full-time hired hand so we can go somewhere and mess around for a few weeks," Bruce says. "We don't mind the work but we'd like to enjoy the fruits of our labor."