

From Alabama to Argentina

Testing bulls on forages is more readily accepted by commercial cattlemen.

In the fall of 1979, the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service in cooperation with the Alabama Beef Cattle Improvement Association initiated the first central bull test in the United States. It utilized annual winter forages such as rye, ryegrass and Arrowleaf clover as the principle feed source.

It was a spin-off of an Extension educational program called Stocker-700. This program was initiated to encourage producers not to sell lightweight calves but keep them and capitalize on their efficiency by utilizing grazing.

The idea for the grazing bull tests was that if we were recommending this type program to our cattlemen, why not test bulls for their ability to gain on forages.

From 1979 until 1985, one test was conducted each year. Since 1986, two tests have been held each year in different parts of the state. A total of 1,175 bulls have been tested in the 15 tests. These tests have all been conducted on private farms with Extension personnel supervising and verifying the data collection.

The Alabama program has been truly a forage test. The bulls are not supplemented during the test except in severe weather. Only one time in 11 years has this happened and then the bulls received hay for a short period of time due to a severe freeze.

The length of the tests have varied due to forage availability varying from a low of 100 days to a high of 223 days. The normal length of the test runs from 140 to 190 days.

Performance has ranged from 0.98 to more than 4 pounds per day. We are convinced that superior bulls can be identified on this type test and that they can be evaluated for gain just as they can on traditional feed tests.

Our program has been to cull the low-performing bulls at the end of the test. Approximately two-thirds of the bulls are maintained at the test site during the summer and sold in late fall as coming two-year-old service-age bulls. These bulls are supplemented with grain to get them in acceptable condition for the sale.

Due primarily to a late-fall and winter calving program in our state, we have been reluctant to try to sell these bulls at the end of the test which is usually in May. However, the bulls end the test in excellent condition and would look good to buyers at that time if they were still in their breeding season.

In the most recent test, 71 bulls representing seven breeds, completed a 153-day test with an overall daily gain of 3.03 pounds. This was one of our best tests due primarily to a mild and moist winter.

The top-gaining bull on this test was

an Angus bull that gained 4.08 pounds for the 153 days. This February 1989 Harts Wild Turkey son completed the test weighing 1,355 pounds. The 4.08 pounds was a 149 ADG ratio. His WDA was 3 pounds at 451 days of age and he had a 7.9 frame with a 37 centimeter scrotal measurement.

In Summary

We are pleased with our grazing bull test program after 15 tests over an 11-year period. The bulls are readily accepted by commercial cattlemen as they are rugged, hard, service-age bulls. We feel that the high-quality grazing provides a level of nutrition that affords the bulls the opportunity to express their ability to grow.

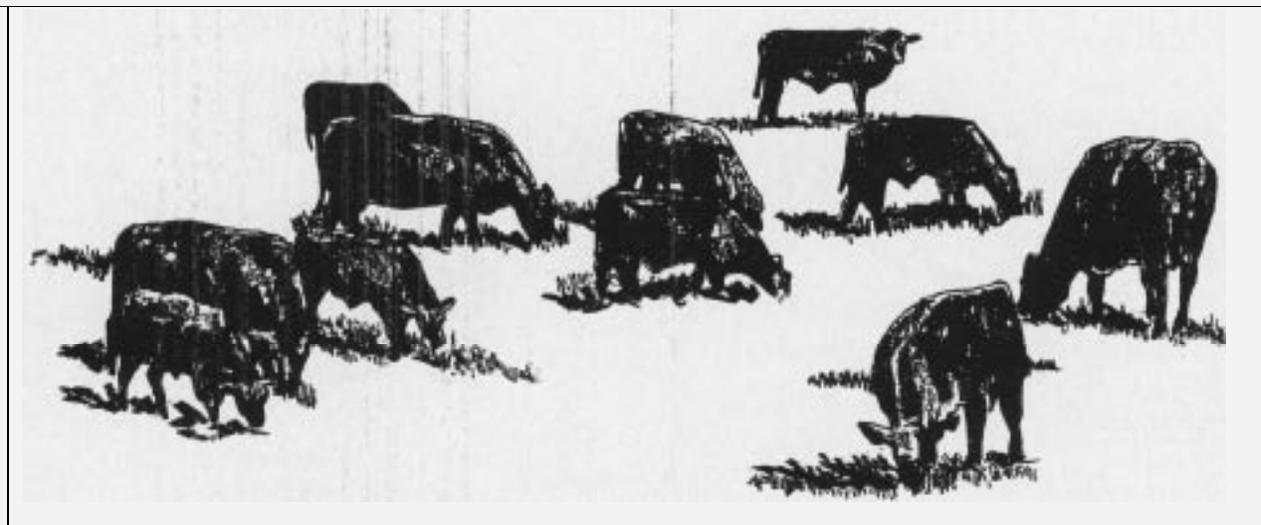
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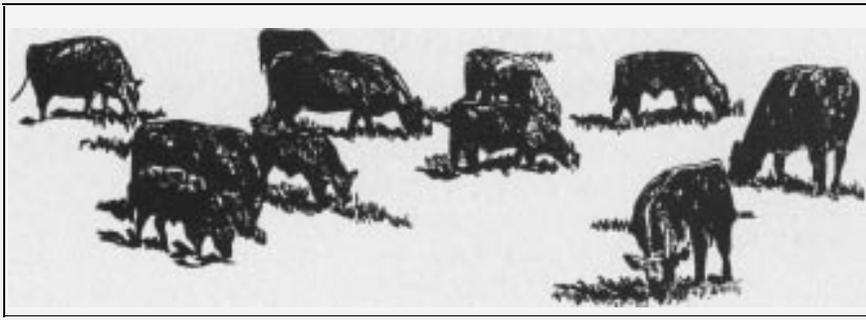
Argentina Pasture Performance

The Angus breeders' objective is to select bulls that, when they are mated with females of their herds, produce superior progenies than presently bred.

Today, the Argentine Angus breeders have the chance to use different evaluation tools to find those superior bulls which contribute to improve the breed population.

Among these tools are pasture performance tests which are being carried





out by the Corporacion Argentina de Aberdeen Angus (CAAA).

These are very important tests, because

they can distinguish between yearling bulls which best adapt to production conditions and markets in Argentina.

Our three main characteristics of beef production are:

1. Feeding with pastures in big extensions.
2. Fattening without grain consumption, adjusted to a 12-month period, with an average daily gain of 500 grams (1.1 pounds) per animal.
3. Requiring steers with a weight of 400 kg (1,000 pounds) at two years to fit the consumer market demand.

These three characteristics model the type of sire more frequently marketed with a frame score of 4 to 6.

Therefore, the CAAA considered, it would be very important to evaluate bulls in the same breeding and fattening conditions as the ones utilized in Argentina and sold at auction. This way, breeders could sell future herd sires objectively evaluated.

It also was suggested that it would be convenient to carry out these tests in different areas to prove the adaptation of the varying biotypes in the Angus breed.

For this purpose, in 1988 the CAAA started the first pasture performance test in the province of La Pampa — a semi-arid zone. Here, during a whole year and after a two-month adaptation period, 12 pedigree bulls and 33 "puro controlado" bulls competed.

Two more tests, which will end in September of this year, are taking place in the province of Entre Rios — a subtropical zone — and in the province of Buenos Aires — a temperate zone.

The CAAA is undertaking the initiation of three other tests to start during 1990 — two in Buenos Aires and the other in La Pampa.

Not only are the bulls weighed to measure their growing velocity every two months, but their scrotal circumference and frame score is measured too. This last parameter, as it was already mentioned, is closely related to the ideal slaughter weight.

The 135 participating bulls in the first three tests have a frame score average of 5. This means that they are placed, due to their size, among the "ideal sire" for our characteristics production. They surely don't miss the good fertility qualities, adaptation, etc., to produce efficiently.

The Argentine Angus breeders have in front of them a long and hard mad to find the genotypes able to produce improvements in their herds. These pasture performance tests are important tools, that, without any doubt, will help them in their search.

— Mariano Fernandez Alt,
South American correspondent

