

The Ultimate Back-up Plan

Producers can use semen collection to preserve genetics.

by Madi Baughman, editorial intern

When purchasing a bull, producers put thought, dedication and time into deciding the genetics and price point at which they want to add to their herd. Considering the investment a good Angus bull often is, producers usually view them as an asset to their operation for several years down the road.

Unfortunately, Mother Nature can be unpredictable, and accidents can happen. Whether it be an injury, sickness or other unforeseen circumstance, bulls can die or become unable to contribute to the breeding rotation for various reasons.

ShowMe Genetics Services owner Steven Rogers says he works with Angus producers who are constantly trying to improve their herd.

“As seedstock producers ourselves, we know what it is to invest in bulls that you’re assuming, when you buy them, the genomically enhanced EPDs (expected progeny differences), the pedigrees and all those things

are going to prove out,” Rogers says of the expectation for genetic improvement of the herd. It can be a difficult pill to swallow to have a bull become unusable.

Lee Jones, veterinarian and associate professor at the University of Georgia, says while insurance can be collected on the physical bull, there is still the issue of lost time and hard work put into determining the genetics producers wanted to add to their herd.

On ice

To help protect themselves in case of an issue, Rogers says collecting the bull’s semen, freezing it and storing it for future use can be a fairly low-cost endeavor. Prices for an in-and-out semen collection (where the bull is not housed) and freezing straws of semen work out to be \$3 or less per straw depending on the quantity frozen.

Cattlemen can store the straws with the custom collection service or purchase a semen tank and the liquid nitrogen to store the semen on-farm.

Collecting and freezing semen from a bull ensures producers they can utilize those genetics in their breeding program regardless of the circumstances

surrounding the bull in the future.

Jones says by insuring both the physical bull and future use of his genetics through semen collection, producers can cover themselves in all aspects.

“If I buy that young bull and he’s capable of freezing semen, I’m going to have access to his genetics whether he gets hurt or not,” Jones says. “If I don’t have that semen in the tank and he gets hurt, his genetics are lost.”

Protecting access to a bull’s genetics is not only a good “insurance policy” to have on hand, but Rogers says it allows producers to continue to analyze and input data from his progeny to constantly be gaining ground from a genotypic and phenotypic standpoint.

The true genetic value of a bull may not be known until years after his productive lifetime.

In the age of innovation, semen collection is proving to be just one more way Angus producers can get a leg up in protecting themselves and the value of their cow herd.

If producers can rely on properly stored semen as a guaranteed access to a bull’s genetics, they can rest assured no matter what the future holds, they will continue to be able to move forward and strive for the future of *The Business Breed* and the beef cattle industry. **AJ**

Editor’s note: Madi Baughman was the Angus Media 2020 summer editorial intern.

