

# Performance Registration Certificate

by Ann Gooding

*Cattlemen tell why (and how) they are using the new Performance Registration Certificate.*

It's a registration certificate with a new twist. Not only does the Performance Registration Certificate (PRC) include an individual's pedigree, it also lists available performance information on that individual and on two generations of its ancestors. And it does all of that on one piece of paper.

Although PRCs are little more than six months old (the first was issued last July by the American Angus Assn.'s Performance Dept.), about 6,000 have been processed. And cattlemen are discovering these new documents have several advantages over their counterparts, the traditional registration certificates.

One of those cattlemen is Glenn Hetzel, Keldron, S.D., whose 12-year-old H&H Angus Ranch herd has always been involved in the American Angus Assn.'s Angus Herd

Improvement Records program (AHIR). Hetzel, who ordered several PRCs when he transferred some cows recently, intends to supply all his buyers (mostly commercial breeders) with the new certificates. More of his buyers are becoming performance conscious, he says. In fact, he estimates that 90% of them now are aware of records as opposed to 30% when he held his first production sale less than 10 years ago. With that in mind, Hetzel plans to see that his buyers are supplied records; he will use PRCs to do it.

Ben Lawson, Bovagene & Associates, Orem, Utah, whose business it is to sell semen, didn't waste any time picking up on the promotional value of PRCs. A number of breeders around the country recently received some promotional literature, courtesy of Lawson. Three bulls were featured, each on its own sheet of top-quality paper. On one side of each sheet of paper was an attractive full-color picture of the featured bull; on the other side, the bull's PRC.

At least two more breeders didn't hesitate to use the PRCs in promoting their product. Harvey Lemmon, Lemmon Cattle Enterprises, Woodbury, Ga., and Dave Pingrey, Black Bull Cattle Co., Benton, Miss., both reprinted the new registration certificates on each bull in their fall 1981 sale catalogs. There's no way to measure impact on customers, both say, but they agree that the availability of the information appealed to at least some of their buyers, most of whom are commercial cattlemen.

Al Smith, manager of Neuhoft Farms, Inc., Dublin, Va., is one of those commercial cattlemen. And he buys quite a few bulls—about 40 every year, in fact, for use in Neuhoft's crossbreeding program. Smith claims he is more apt to attend sales—like those of Lemmon and Pingrey—where he knows PRCs will be available. Not only that,

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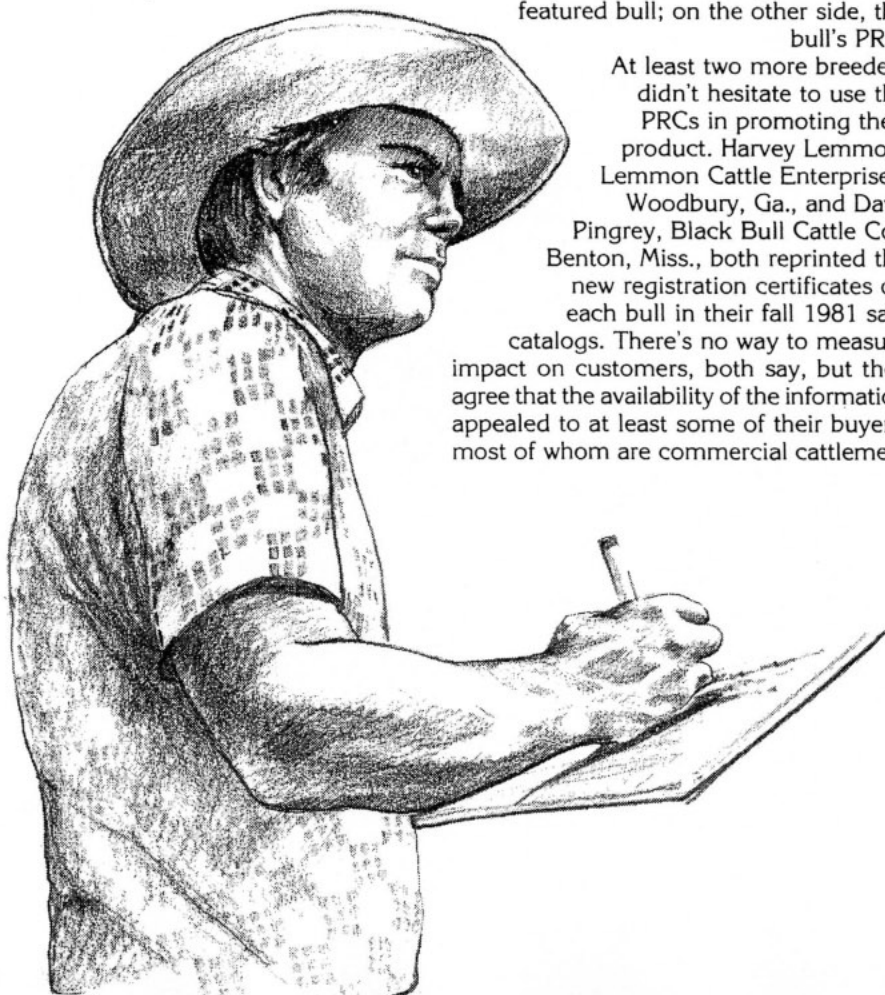
but once he gets there he's willing to pay more for the animal of his choice. "I would probably pay a third more on a bull if I knew about his calving problems or lack of calving problems," he says, "and if I knew how he rated in maternal traits. If you are talking about a bull for \$1,500, with that performance information he'd probably be worth another \$500 to me. A \$3,000 bull—he'd probably be worth another \$1,000. Because it's all right there. Everything you could want to know about a bull is on his PRC." In fact, Smith adds, "I can see a year or two down the road when these certificates are a little more widely used, the possibility of my not buying bulls from somebody who doesn't have PRCs."

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R.C. Price, Angus Acres, Newville, Ala., would be interested to hear that; he sells bulls to commercial breeders like Smith.



And he's sold on the PRCs, as his background might suggest. His 45-head herd has been on performance about eight years and his bulls (or their progeny) have consistently topped the Auburn test; they were, in fact, the first there to crack the 1,200-lb. mark at a year.

As Price describes it, "This new certificate gives me complete performance for calving ease, weaning weight, yearling weight, mothering ability and carcass traits. It shows individual animal's records, the records of its progeny, records of the progeny of the animal's sire and dam as well as that of his paternal grandsire and dam and maternal grandsire and dam. That information," continues Price, "should be very valuable to commercial cattlemen. They can look at the performance certificate and know what performance they can expect. The PRC," he adds, "is one of the best things that has happened to the Angus breed along with the sire evaluation program and the use of A.I. in the Angus herd."

Dr. S.R. Evans, Greenwood, Miss., whose herd of about 60 breeding age females has been on performance for 10 years, believes the value of the PRC lies in how well it's tied to information on the sire evaluation program.

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*"For me to have a PRC with no data on it? That's no good. It's the sire evaluation that allows you to tie the PRC to other cattle. Then it means something to me."*—**Dr. S.R. Evans, Evans Angus Farm, Greenwood, Miss.**

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When he sent in transfers after his sale last October, he requested his buyers be sent PRCs. He's also ordered some of the new certificates while registering calves (although he recommends waiting at least until yearling data are compiled before doing that). So he thinks the PRCs have some value but, he points out, PRCs have no value if there are no records behind them. "For me to have a PRC with no data on it? That's no good. It's the sire evaluation that allows you to tie the PRC to other cattle. Then it means something to me." That way, he continues, his cattle can be tied (and

compared) to cattle in other herds. So, if data accumulated do not tie to a well-used A.I. sire or to the dam of such a sire he feels it doesn't mean much. And he feels breeders should certainly be aware of that limitation. PRCs, he cautions, are only tools. Those using them should understand their value correlates with the amount of information behind them.

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*Would he pay more for a bull on which a PRC is available? "Sure . . . You have (on the PRC) ratios on the sire and dam and also on the grandsires and granddams."*—**Howard Dorton, Rollins Ranches, Okeechobee, Fla.**

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That's also a point made by Pingrey. "These PRCs," he says, "don't make cattle worth a nickel more unless they've got some recorded performance in back of them." But if the information is there, he thinks PRCs are great.

A lot of Black Bull Cattle Co.'s bulls sell to breeders who use them on Brahman and Brahman crosses. There are, Pingrey figures, two reasons those breeders want his bulls. First, he says, the bulls are used to breed heifers; that means calving weights are important. Second, resulting heifer calves often are kept for momma cows; that means emphasis on maternal traits. So Pingrey points out, "The PRC shows not only the birth weight of the animal but what that birth weight represents in our herd. Whether its above or below average. You know it's the ratio and the birth weight too, which is really important." And the maternal trait figures also are listed—clearly and concisely. It's all down in black and white. On that one piece of paper.

That's what appeals to Howard Dorton, manager of Rollins Ranches, Okeechobee, Fla. Brahman, Hereford and Angus all figure into the program there and Dorton needs a lot of bulls—3,500 cows will be bred at Rollins Ranches this next year.

Would Dorton be willing to pay more for a bull on which a PRC is available? "Sure," he says. The value for him, he explains, lies in using the information on 205 and 365-day ratios on the animal he's purchasing.

And he says, "You have ratios on the sire and dam and also on the grandsires and grandams, if they have been on performance records long enough to have information showing what their offspring have done." It is simply that, he says, that makes the PRC-backed animal more valuable to him than one on which there is only a regular registration certificate.

But Dorton, like Smith, is a commercial breeder who wants performance information and who understands it. There are many commercial breeders who don't. That's one of Dr. Evans' concerns. He feels not enough buyers appreciate performance information; however, he intends to continue to request PRCs when he transfers cattle.

And that may be at least one small step in the direction of performance education. The PRC may well turn out to be a teaching aid.

Dr. Frank Suma, RuBud Farms, Rockford, Ill., agrees with that concept. Because it has all performance information on one sheet of paper along with the pedigree, Dr. Suma thinks a buyer's curiosity may well be aroused when he receives a PRC instead of the regular certificate.

That's only one reason, though, that Dr. Suma thinks the American Angus Assn. should require all registration certificates be

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of the performance sort. "The successful future of the breed depends on taking a larger slice of the beef industry pie," he contends. "The only way to do that is to produce Angus cattle that outperform, on an efficient basis, other breeds of cattle." This, he feels, can only be accomplished by performance evaluation programs and by using performance data in breeding programs. "The PRC," he says, "presents performance data and allows you to use it in

*Performance Registration Certificates. PRCs. They are valuable new merchandising and management tools. Or at least that's the consensus of a sampling of cattlemen who are already using them.*

*First made available last July, PRCs, which can be substituted for the traditional registration certificates, combine pedigree and performance information. They are available on request and at last count more than 6,000 have been processed through the American Angus Assn.'s Performance Dept.*

*Thanks to computer wizardry, an animal's pedigree, individual performance information and performance information on two generations of its ancestors are included on the PRC. Birth weights, weight ratios, breeding value ratios, figures on maternal traits, sire evaluation carcass information—all appear on an animal's PRC. And we're talking about only one piece of paper, 8½ by 11 inches.*

*If requested when animals are transferred, PRCs will be sent to new owners at no cost other than the existing transfer fee. If requested at registration, the charge is \$1 more than the regular fee. And for \$2, a traditional registration certificate can be exchanged for a PRC any time or an existing PRC can be updated.*

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Dr. Suma's RuBud herd, founded in 1952, always has been performance based; on top of that pinpointers to measure individual feed efficiency were introduced in the late '70s. So Dr. Suma is used to handling lots of data. Nevertheless, he likes the fact that PRCs simplify that handling. "One certificate gives us the total picture of the potential breeding performance on a calf," he points out. "Previously a large part of this information was available through AHIR. If you had kept complete AHIR records over a number of years you could go

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back and find a certain amount of the data. What the PRC does is allow the computer to work for you and put it all on one sheet in front of you."

Pingrey, too, considers the PRC a convenience, a time saver. The PRC, he says, offers an instant review, something he feels is particularly valuable when he's making up his breeding roster. "Even though every good cowman is supposed to know every cow in his herd, we run about 550," he says, "and I'm getting old enough that I don't mind having to refresh my memory."

Pingrey, probably one of performance's strongest supporters, has kept a lot of records for a number of years. In the office at Black Bull there's a separate sheet on each cow listing pertinent data like birth date, tattoo, individual performance on the front; a copy of the registration is on the back. "Now," Pingrey says, "when we copy this PRC and put it on the back, when we whip the sheet over we not only have who

she is but what her ancestors have done and what we can expect her to do.

"Because we have reams and reams of AHIR information, I could go back and dig up all the stuff that's on the Performance Registration Certificate. But you are talking about time whereas with the PRC you just

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flip that sheet over and there it is staring you right in the face."

Lemmon also likes the idea of having one piece of paper to handle. He points out, like Pingrey, that although there really isn't more information on the PRC than is available through AHIR, it's a whole lot easier to read, especially, he says, with all weight ratios on the individuals listed on the pedigree.

Hetzel agrees. "The PRC puts everything out where you can see it all at once. You don't have to go through three or four different books to find all the different information. Even though we have AHIR records, when you look at one of these performance pedigrees it gives you a lot more information. It's all right there in front of your nose. You don't have to dig for it." Besides, he adds, "It gives you a lot better overall view of the performance background on the cattle because you get AHIR information on more than the cattle in your own herd."

Hetzel's confidence in the new certificate is so strong he plans to order them on his cow herd, then use them in selecting replacements. Price plans to do the same. And Dr. Evans is convinced the documents' value lies in within herd use.

Even so, there appears to be yet another value outside the herd. The PRC can substantiate a bonafide performance program.

Smith is a bull buyer interested in records and the misuse of the terms performance and performance-tested is one of his pet peeves. He's gone to sales, he says,

whose consignments have been touted as being performance backed, only to find that description can mean as little as a few weights recorded on weanlings. But if someone supplies PRCs, Smith says, the proof of their performance involvement lies in the figures.

Lemmon, whose 250 cows would qualify as truly performance-backed, adds a word of caution, however, about those figures and records. "Records are really no better than the people who keep them," he says. "We sell cattle according to our own reputation. But," he adds, "once people have made up their minds that they believe in your program and they're going to buy your cattle, then the records enable them to tell the top cattle in your herd from the lower producing cattle."

It boils down to establishing credibility and that had something to do with Lemmon's use of PRCs in his sale catalog. "I think the PRCs tend to lend credibility to what you are doing because you are willing to reveal all information on your cattle—even the lower end. I'm sure," he adds, "PRCs have appeal to buyers."

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Generally then, those who have used the new registration documents are enthusiastic about their possibilities. And hands down, they think the PRC far outranks the standard registration certificate. The added value lies in promotion and merchandising, in making in-herd decisions, in saving time, in putting performance in front of the public. A PRC tells the individual animal's story, be it good or bad, all on one page.

Although he doesn't take credit for being the first to say it, Pingrey puts it this way: "A regular registration certificate shows who the animal is. A Performance Registration Certificate shows what the animal is. That," he says, "is a pretty good summation of the whole situation." 