

# Using the Sire Evaluation Report

An ad in a recent farm publication caught my eye with the headline "Selecting a Herd Sire Isn't Easy." I'm sure for most cattlemen no truer words were ever spoken, and the challenge becomes more a reality as we now look at the widespread use of A.I. and the excellent selection of bulls for use either naturally or artificially.

Most cattlemen will agree that the challenge and responsibility of selecting a herd bull is an exciting part of everyday cattle breeding. And one of the most valuable tools for this decision making is now available through National Sire Evaluation reports.

The 1980 report of 165 bulls was a special section of the January ANGUS JOURNAL, and the results of that report offer cattlemen one of the best opportunities available to select a sire from an objective test against Angus Reference Sires. While the results appear like a bible of facts and figures relative to growth and carcass information, there is a fairly systematic way to review the data and select bulls that will fit specific herd needs. Almost daily there is inquiry about Sire Evaluation bulls, and the following observations may help cattlemen use the results more effectively.

## Specific Herd Means

That phrase "specific herd means" is exactly that. In using Sire Evaluation results, a breeder must first objectively evaluate his cow herd and determine which traits need improvement. No one can do this but the breeder; and in most cases, a cattleman has a good idea which traits are most important to him. For example, it may be weaning weights that need improvement or possibly yearling weights or carcass traits. Whatever the case, a herd analysis is step one in using Sire Evaluation results. In addition, a cattleman (especially a seed stock producer) must determine what is important to his commercial customers.

Sire selection today will be represented in the herd bull offerings in the next two to three years, so present and future needs of customers are important considerations in sire selection.

Once the cow herd has been studied, it becomes a matter of sitting down and studying Sire Evaluation results. If weaning weights are important, there are 90 bulls in the 1980 report that are rated as A or B for the trait. The A and B range for expected progeny difference is +.02 lb. to +29.8 lb. for weaning weight. Only 18 bulls had an A rating (+10.5 lb. to +29.8 lb.) for weaning weight. So if weaning weight is a major concern, then the list of 165 bulls has already been whittled down to 18 bulls with an A ranking in Sire Evaluation.

## Yearling Weight

Next is yearling weight, and a review of the data indicates 88 bulls with an A or B rating (+.04 lb. to +44.1 lb.) and only 24 bulls with an A rating (+20 lb. to +44.1 lb.) for yearling weight.

Combining weaning and yearling information, there are 65 bulls that ranked B or higher for weaning and yearling weights. There are 13 bulls that ranked A for both weaning and yearling weights.

Using the carcass traits of quality grade, yield grade and retail yield per day, a breeder sorts through additional bulls. Carcass information gives a good indication of composition of gain, and bulls ranking higher in yield grade sire a higher proportion of lean to fat in their offspring.

The end result is that seven bulls in the 1980 report rank B or higher in *all traits* evaluated. Two additional bulls on the purebred option program had A's and B's for weaning and yearlings weights. With this in mind, a cattleman can study the results of the report and, depending on herd needs or goals, can likely reduce the number of sire prospects to 10 or 15 bulls. This approach may appear like an over simplification, but it's still the best approach to reviewing Sire Evaluation data and selecting one or more sires for use.

## Other Considerations

Other considerations are birth weight and calving ease data as well as maternal breeding values. The maternal breeding value from AHIR field data gives an indication of daughters' milk production of sires in the test. Most bulls completing Sire Evaluation have daughters in production, so an accurate maternal breeding value is an important addition to Sire Evaluation reporting. For example, if a breeder is looking for maximum growth plus strong maternal traits, there are 15 bulls in the 1980 report that have an A ranking for yearling weight and a maternal breeding value ratio of 100 or above.

At first glance the 165 bulls ranked in the 1980 report seem like a large number to sort through. A closer look shows there are at least that many bulls offered in an average issue of the ANGUS JOURNAL for consideration in a breeding program.

Granted, Sire Evaluation results may not answer all the questions about a bull and his future progeny. A breeder may have specific needs for pedigree or type that fits well into his breeding program. Nor do the results rank every bull cattlemen are interested in.

In conclusion, Sire Evaluation results offer sound objective facts about a sire. There is no grand champion, so to speak, for each report but instead a number of winners who excel for performance traits. Cattlemen interested in improving specific herd traits can select the sires to improve their herds through future progeny performance.

Angus breeders should study the results before making breeding plans in 1980. The 1980 report including maternal breeding value information from AHIR field data is a good starting place for any cattlemen interested in performance cattle for the '80s.



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