

# Deer Creek Ranch's Value-Added Program Is *Customer Pleaser*

BY WADE LEWIS

It's unanimous. Marketing is by far the most difficult part of the purebred cattle business. It's the void many fall into, never to return. You can produce cattle all day long, but when it comes time to cash in — well there's a big difference between taking calves to the local sale barn and marketing purebred cattle. Some can never make that quantum leap.

For Paul Carpenter of Deer Creek Ranch, Saint Jo, Texas, sound marketing is backed by two simple golden rules:

1. Breed the kind of cattle you would like to buy.
2. Treat your customer like you want to be treated.



Paul Carpenter (far left) visits with fellow Texas Angus breeders Judge Clyde Whiteside and Bill Hallman during the Deer Creek Ranch Value-Added Female Sale.

"E stablished long-term goals and don't go for short-term rewards," Carpenter says. "Breeding programs are not created overnight and neither is successful marketing. Develop an honest program with integrity and back it up with action."

The Deer Creek breeding program is 100 percent artificial insemination (AI); no clean-up bulls are used. Current genetics are backed by sound expected progeny differences (EPDs), thus the Deer Creek product always carries a pedigree which is recognizable and marketable.

That position alone has helped create demand for Deer Creek cattle. In a time when producers are looking for highly predictable genetics, sound EPDs and where carcass data is becoming more and more important, Carpenter strives to offer a complete package.

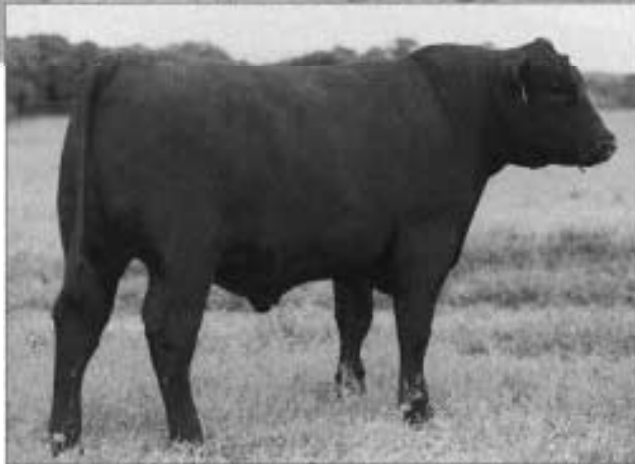
Still, it's Deer Creek Ranch's unique value-added program that is the real customer pleaser. This program is designed to build a strong customer base with special emphasis on breeders who are new to the business and who need extra assistance when it comes to making mating decisions and getting AI work done. These special services can enhance the value of the cattle, and the customers appreciate the extra effort on their behalf.

All cattle purchased from Deer Creek Ranch are

## Deer Creek Value-Added cont.



*Bull Power... Angus bulls like these from Deer Creek Ranch, recently off test at the Oklahoma Beef Inc. Test Station, will return to Stillwater, Okla., in a few months to be marketed at the OBI sale. (Inset) AnEXT son bred by Deer Creek and developed at the OBI Test Station.*



shipped free of charge. The cattle are handled carefully, with the intention they arrive in the same shape they left.

Any female who sells with a calf at side or sells open and ready to breed can remain at Deer Creek Ranch after the sale. Carpenter will breed the female back to the bull of the buyer's choice, even providing the semen if it's in his inventory, and then will ship the female, safe in calf, to the buyer. Deer Creek also assumes liability of the animal (up to the original

purchase price) while in their care.

This has become an especially attractive part of the value-added marketing program, Carpenter says, "simply because so many part-time cattle producers find it difficult to do an effective job of AI. We are glad to give our recommendations on the best matings, which helps new breeders."

Buyer information on sale cattle is plentiful. All EPDs, including carcass data, is printed. Also available are in-

herd ratios and breeding updates. Whenever possible, fetuses are sexed and that information is made available, as well.

**For fellow Texas** Angus breeders Mike and Dotty Watson, the Deer Creek experience began with the purchase of a bred cow in 1994. The Watsons are now loyal customers who have benefitted from Deer Creek's value-added marketing program.

"Dotty and I know how

discouraging a bad cattle buying experience can be," says Mike. "If more folks were like Paul, we'd have fewer leaving the business and more joining."

In the 1995 Deer Creek Ranch sale cattle sold into 10 states. Carpenter is quick to point out that for a purebred program to be accepted on a national scale, several factors must be in place.

"We put great emphasis in our advertising product. High quality photos are a tremendous asset to the image of your sale offering," he says. "We spend considerable time and effort in preparing cattle for photos, getting that 'great' shot, and then making sure they get out in front of the buyers."

Carpenter has found placing his catalog in breed publications to be a great benefit in that regard. His full guarantee of buyer satisfaction or a refund is also a factor in making it easy for producers to purchase cattle

sight-unseen.

Mississippi Angus breeders Sam Brown and Paul St. Blanc of Lena Farms know and appreciate the value they received when making a phone purchase in the 1994 Deer Creek sale.

Lena Farms purchased a first-calf heifer and her bull calf, along with a bred heifer. Carpenter kept both females at his ranch until the bred heifer calved. Then he rebred both females before sending them to their new owners in Mississippi in late spring of 1995. Lena received the cattle just a few days prior to the Mississippi Cattlemen's Tour, which would be making a stop at Lena.

Both females had bull calves by Emulation N Bar 5522. St. Blanc says they received "lots of interest in the calves during the tour stop." But the story continues. Both bulls made their show debuts

at the Mississippi State Fair Angus Show, where the September yearling earned grand champion and the other calf won its division. Since that time both bulls have been successfully shown again.

**Another facet** of the Deer Creek breeding and marketing program is the use of the Oklahoma Beef Inc. (OBI) bull test facility. For the last eight years all Deer Creek bulls have been put on test at OBI, with no exceptions.

What are the benefits of a bull test station? "First and foremost, it allows us to develop our bulls in a controlled environment, against a set of their contemporaries, not just from our program, but from other programs across the Southwest."

Carpenter has complete confidence in the OBI staff and their management, and is

satisfied his bulls are getting the best feed and handling.

Performance information assembled on the bulls (average daily gain, weight per day of age, adjusted yearling weight, hip height, scrotal circumference, ribeye and ~~backfat~~ measurements) helps Carpenter make future mating decisions. "It gives us a barometer by which to measure the functionality of our cattle," he says.

Last but not least, OBI bull sales give Deer Creek Ranch more marketing exposure to a larger buying public and the opportunity to receive top dollar for their product.

In the fall 1995 OBI sale, Deer Creek Ranch sold 25 bulls at an average price of \$2,300. Their top bull brought \$4,000. The OBI Angus average for 125 lots was \$1,785.

**If the value-added** program wasn't enough, Deer Creek Ranch has an aggressive embryo transfer ET program. "The ET program allows us to concentrate on the superior performing females in our herd and then market these individuals to others, without having to keep a cow her entire life to achieve maximum production," Carpenter says.

In keeping with their value-added policy, Deer Creek also offers cooperative ET programs with a variety of options to suit both parties.

"Many of our customers would like to flush cows, but for one reason or another, can't. Our cooperative program allows us to help our customer achieve accelerated results from their purchase," Carpenter says.

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