



Murray G. Fretz

*Bible Thought: Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds; for riches do not last forever.*

*Proverbs 27:23, 24*

# EDITORIAL

## Artificial Insemination Comes Of Age

The use of Artificial Insemination has finally matured in the beef industry, to the point that it is in almost as common usage today as it is in the dairy industry. What a difference a few short years make! It seems only yesterday that we were seeking the protection of the courts to stop its unrestricted use.

Now, the *ANGUS JOURNAL* carries a wide variety of ads each month listing semen for sale from bulls of most every bloodline within the breed. An Angus breeder without a variety of bull semen in his semen tank is just not with the times. At Angus seminars we hear talks on sire summaries, estrus synchronization, semen handling procedures, super ovulation, embryo transplants, and other related topics. This is all good. We are learning to make use of the latest in technology, that only a few short years ago was either untried or unknown.

Open A. I. carries with it some very serious responsibilities on the part of those individuals or firms offering semen for sale. To the fullest extent possible they should ascertain that their bulls are genetically free of defects that, years later, could seriously hinder the advancement of the breed. Widespread use of a bull artificially will, in a very short period of time, locate problems if there are any, that may have taken most of a bull's lifetime to find in natural service. From this standpoint, A. I. can be of great help in pinpointing genetic defects—if after they are identified, are handled judiciously.

Through sire evaluation, breeders have the very latest and best information on which to base their breeding decisions. But, this can pose a problem when you ask how to pick the best bull. The best bull for what? No bull will be best in all the traits desired. You must know your cows, their

weaknesses and strong points, and then set up priorities that will improve their deficiencies. Quite likely the bull you finally select will be a compromise—having traded off one trait to gain strength in another.

What about those bulls from which you want semen, but have no sire evaluation record or AHIR information? Perhaps it is just a young untried bull, but in your own mind you think he has a future. How do you go about selection of semen from them with any degree of assurance that you are going to get an improvement in your calf crop? Well, it's just about like the games of chance at the county fair—you pay your money and take your chance. You can put the odds considerably in your favor if you know the herd in which he is working. Study his dam, his granddam and any other females in his background that are available for inspection. If he has calves on the ground, ask his owner for birth and weaning weights. Probably most important in selection of bulls and semen is to know your breeder. Deal only with reputable firms. After all, the whole purebred industry is built on integrity. Without it we have nothing. If you insist on just ordering semen because you like the way a bull might have been described, or because his pedigree looks intriguing, then you deserve what you get in your next calf crop.

Artificial Insemination can contribute more to the genetic improvement of the breed than any other tool in use today. But, we have to understand its strong and weak links and act accordingly. Genetically proven sires can do in the next decade what it took our forefathers half a century to accomplish. The future is exciting. Let's keep it that way by properly using all the knowledge and technology we have at our disposal. ☐