

# About aged beef cows

by Gilbert S. Watts

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Of all the traits required to make really great producing beef cows, vigorous longevity could be the least appreciated. Longevity is economically important.

It may cost \$500, likely more, to raise a newborn heifer until she drops her first calf. At her fifth calving, that's \$100 per calf; at her tenth, it's \$50 per calf. If you like, add interest, insurance or whatever, the relativity of the example remains valid. Basic cost per calf is reduced by productive longevity.

In our 60-cow Angus herd, one-fourth of the cows are 10 years or older. The oldest are 17, 16, and 15 years. Three are 14, one is 12, and three are 10. These are not aged decrepid creatures. After calving first as two-year-olds, all have borne a timely calf each year and raised it

well. They run with the herd, they're not pampered.

These aged cows are bonus cows. They are dependable farm helpers. We're proud of them. They have been fertile breeders, easy calvers, good mothers, constitutionally strong all the way. Otherwise, they would have been culled long ago. They are the kind we aim to breed.

When founding our herd over 30 years ago, we luckily got a good start with lots of genes for longevity. All were daughters or granddaughters of aged cows. Over the years, a simple long-term program appears to have held together or even to have concentrated, the many constructive genes that make for longevity.

A few top producing proved mature cows are mated each year A.I. to a mature, progeny-proved, and

different sire, but never, never to an unproved, youngster, however popular. Then the all-around best sons are kept to serve naturally on pasture. Also kept are the well-balanced, not extreme, structurally sound heifers.

I am sure many breeders are aware of the values of longevity and try to increase it in their herds. Nevertheless, as we read the ads and articles in the livestock journals, almost nobody notes or promotes great old cows that get the job done year after year without assistance. Our buyers like sons and daughters of long-proved matrons and sires.

Finally, participation in the Angus Herd Improvement Record aids materially in the identification and recognition of animals with potential to go on and on as Pathfinders, both in name and in fact. **AJ**