

New Tools and Old Ways

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They say in sports the only thing harder than winning is winning again. In the cattle business the only thing harder than survival is surviving a long time

Thirty years ago the unknown was less of a factor. It was a more stable world then, a world where you knew your neighbor and you bought your cattle from a friend.

Today the world is bigger, faster, more options are open, people are on the move. You might still know your neighbor, but you're more apt to do business with a stranger.

For today's cattlemen, both registered and commercial, there isn't always a clear choice between smart and foolish, right or wrong. Instead, they often have to decide between options whose benefits aren't guaranteed and whose drawbacks are unknown.

How do these cattlemen keep from being knocked from the saddle? How can they look to the future with optimism?

The cattlemen of today are producing better cattle than ever before by finding new tools and interfacing them with old ways.

Here's how seven commercial cattlemen on the West Coast and the Intermountain Basin are meeting the challenges of a changing world.

Cold Springs Ranch, home of the Hyatt Cattle Company

When Norm Hyatt, owner, and Bob Kerby, manager, of Cold Springs Ranch sat down and looked at where they were going and where they wanted to go, they knew they had a big job ahead. They established a criteria to get there and decided if a cow didn't meet the challenge, she couldn't stay.

"If a coyote gets a calf, that's mama's fault," states Kerby. "We're not out there babysitting."

On Cold Springs Ranch, a cow has to raise her calf on her own. That's what the commercial man needs and that's what Hyatt and Kerby are after.

The home of the Hyatt Cattle Company is located in the center of the state of Oregon, 65 miles from Prineville. Hyatt

bought Cold Springs Ranch, a territorial homestead, a little over two years ago when his operation outgrew its site in Washington state. The ranch includes 14,000 deeded acres and 45,000 BLM (Bureau of Land Management) private allotment acres. There are 800 acres of irrigated meadows on the deeded land. The rest is desert and hill country dryland. The pasture grasses are a variety with Idaho Fescue, Blue Bunch Wheatgrass and Squirrel Tail being the main ingredients.

Four hundred registered Angus and 50 registered Brangus run with 300 commercial cows on the vast pastures of this ranch. The commercial cattle carry a strong Angus influence.

Kerby said they maintain both a registered and commercial herd for two reasons. Number one, Hyatt's goal for the registered cows will not fill the capacity of the ranch. Second, it gives them a good contemporary group on which to compare the registered cattle.

The commercial cows are bred natural service on the BLM land. The registered fall calvers are bred at headquarters in the winter. In the spring, they're turned out on the BLM land. The spring calvers are bred artificially with the cleanup bulls put in through one cycle and close to home. After that, they go to the BLM too.

"With the exception of the short breeding season, the registered cattle are treated just like the commercial cattle," says Kerby. "I think that's important in the registered business."

"We are unique in that we run our registered herd closer to the commercial man's environment than any herd I know," he continued.

"I feel no matter what the environment a calf is raised in, the superior genetics will show through," declared Kerby. "Whether it's in our rugged desert environment or on irrigated pasture and creep feed, the best calf is going to prove himself."

Kerby and Hyatt use all the performance tools available in selecting their bulls and managing their cow herd. Like Kerby said, "If you make a mistake in bull selection, you make a three-year mistake, especially if you are wanting replacement heifers."

The most important tool they have found in selecting bulls is EPD (Expected

Progeny Differences) and fertility tests and, of course, records on calving ease for the heifers. They use the herd sire summaries as one of their sources of information.

Fertility is important because, as Kerby says, "If you don't have fertility, all the growth in the world won't do you any good."

"EPD is a relatively new tool and I'm not totally satisfied with it, but it's the best thing we have got," Kerby stated. "We used a bull on EPD rated with low birthweights, with low accuracy. He got us in a lot of trouble. The records will become more accurate with more information."

Visual appraisal is rated at an 8 on a scale of 1 to 10 in the Hyatt herd. However, that is only after performance and structural soundness. "Let's face it," Kerby laughed, "nice-looking cattle sell better than homely cattle. Visual has to rank high, but you have to have performance."

Angus bulls aren't used exclusively because Hyatt is going for a terminal cross for feedlot performance on their crossbred cows, in hopes for more total dollars. In the commercial herd, they use black bulls to get their replacement heifers. In the registered herd, they use a Chianina bull as clean-up to get club calves.

Knowing the environment the bull was raised in is important to Kerby and Hyatt. That's why they don't go to Denver to buy their bulls.

They have been buying bulls from Lettunich and Sons in Idaho. They are partners in HAR Bang 1774 and have some of his daughters back in the herd. They buy some replacement heifers but have raised most of them. For the registered heifer replacements, they look to Lettunich. For the commercial cowherd, they just go out and shop.

Hyatt has been in the cattle business since 1943 when his father bought 12 registered heifers from Highland Angus Farms. Hyatt said, "From then on, we never bought any exterior female blood until 20 years ago."

Cold Springs Ranch has been on a strict culling program with the registered herd. "We've been getting rid of the older cows and putting in the new generation," says Kerby. "The improvement from 1987 to 1988 was a boost in our daily gain to weaning time of 30 percent, and we raised the percent of the weaning calf crop by 5 percent. Of course, a lot of our

cows had been on irrigated pasture in Washington. They made quite an adjustment coming to this rugged desert country." Modestly he added, "I don't think it was entirely management. I think it was just younger cows doing a better job."

Most of the cattle are marketed and sold at private treaty right off the ranch. In 1988, their commercial calf crop was contracted into California to go on grass.

They are also interested in the Certified Angus Beef Program. Kerby remarked he has been reading the success stories and would like to know more about it from the cattleman's standpoint, namely the premium prices filtering down to the guy who is raising the cattle.

The goals Kerby and Hyatt have for the ranch include higher fertility, increased milk production, a higher degree of efficiency, more uniformity and a higher percentage of the calves being left as bulls. "I'd like to raise a 99 percent calf crop with every individual being a quality individual," alleges Kerby. "That's a high goal but you have to have a positive attitude."

"One of the biggest headaches for a rancher is getting the right manager," says Hyatt. "We feel extremely fortunate

to have a person like Bob Kerby. It takes the right people to make the right operation work."

Kerby and Don Wagner, the assistant manager, are the only paid employees on the ranch. However, it is truly a family operation. The wives and children are a bonus when it comes to getting the work done.

Kerby's wife, Carol, is a registered nurse, but when they moved to Oregon, she gave up nursing. She keeps the individual records on the registered and commercial cows. Both wives and all five children help ride the pastures and check the cattle. The kids are paid a dollar day for each day they ride. In the fall when they get \$50 or \$60, they think riding is heaven.

"To them, it's fun," Kerby says. "Usually after a long day's ride and we are headed home, we stop and explore some of the old caves that are on the place or jump in the river for a swim."

Kerby puts in at least 70 hours per week. That includes the hours he does book work and researches pedigrees. Hyatt works with Kerby on bull and cow selection. They seem to agree 95 percent of the time. "I'm lucky to work for a person like Norm," quips Kerby.

While Kerby sees the biggest benefit of being in the cattle business as the quality of time you get to spend with the family, he sees the biggest problem as the 70-hour work week. He says, though, it beats punching a time clock and being too tired to play with your kids when you get home.

The Paulina School with its three classrooms and 35 children is the center of the families' activities off the ranch. After the eighth grade, students are bused 65 miles to Prineville to finish high school. Kerby is on the Paulina School Committee and is president of the Parent Teacher Organization.

Kerby says he feels fortunate to have been around some excellent cattlemen in the past. There were three he worked for that had a positive influence on him. "Hopefully, as I get older I can inspire somebody else and help them along the way," Kerby thoughtfully reflected, "You don't get where you are by yourself."

With the nearest neighbor 14 miles away, it's peaceful and quiet at Cold Springs Ranch. Kerby enjoys the ranch and the cattle. "To be a good cowboy you have to," he declared.

Forster Cattle Company

Five generations of Forsters have seen their children grow up in the cattle business in California. Jerry Forster, owner of Forster Cattle Company, has four sons who are raising cattle in the Forster tradition as the sixth generation. Since there are several grandchildren, it looks like Forster Cattle Company will be around for a long time.

Forsters have run the gamut. They used to raised Shorthorns and Herefords. However, in search of the ideal carcass, they have steadily improved and evolved to Angus and Gelbvieh. They have even developed their own herd of "Gelbang" cows.

Forster Cattle Company is located between Ione and Maxwell, north of Stockton, Calif., on 12,500 acres. There are 600 acres irrigated pasture, 350 acres of rice which they farm themselves, and some row crop ground that's leased out. The majority of the acres is dryland, 5,100 acres at Ione and 5,500 acres at Maxwell.

Eight hundred head of mother cows and 50 head of quarter horses call this home. Angus and Gelbvieh, 50-50 cross, make up the commercial herd of cows. The purebred herd of Gelbangs are three-eighths Gelbvieh and five-eighths Angus. "It's our own breed," states Forster. "They work very well for us."

Forster's sons Dan and Richard are partners and work with him at Ione. David and Tom are also partners and run the Maxwell place. In addition to the Forsters, there's one hired man at each place. They work the cattle on horseback which makes having the quarter horse operation a real benefit. Forster has two other sons that are not involved in the cattle business.

Even though Forster has a small herd of purebred Angus, he says, "I'm not a purebred breeder, I like commercial cattle."

Forster said he started using Angus bulls about 20 years ago. "We were breeding Hereford cows to Swiss Simmentals. The calves were getting too big and they were every color in the rainbow," quipped Forster. "The Gelbvieh crossed with the Angus produced the black color and skin pigment we liked."

"To me," he continued, "it's the ideal cross. For replacement heifers you couldn't ask for a more maternal cross."

Forster breeds his heifers at 13 to 15 months of age with no major calving problems. They calve at around 22 months. The heifers are yearlings in September and go in with the bulls in November. Some of the heifers are as young as 12 months. According to Forster there has been no ill effects on the growth or milking of the heifers. "It really tells you which ones are going to be

good cows. It weeds out the weak end," he stated.

"However," he continued, "I think it is a necessity to supplement cows during the breeding season. We have used Vaquero Supplement Blocks for the last six years and know it works. We end up with 95 percent bred cows and 93 percent bred heifers."

Performance records are important at the Forster Cattle Company. They keep detailed performance records on the Gelbang cattle. "We keep simple records on the commercial herd that tell us what we need to know; how our cattle are doing, which calves to castrate and which ones not to," says Forster. "But they are not like you keep on a purebred herd or as extensive as we keep on our Gelbang herd."

Permanent ownership is indicated by a wattle (a slice in the dewlap) and is used on the heifers from Angus bulls. Forster knows from that mark to put Gelbvieh bulls on those heifers after their second calf. This keeps the commercial herd at 50 percent Angus-Gelbvieh cross.

Even though they have bred their first-calf heifers to about everything, Angus has worked well. The Gelbang bulls will be used on heifers for the first time in 1989.

Forster buys his Angus bulls from Concar Ranch and they raise all their own replacement heifers.

He looks at the showing reports, but hasn't gone out and bought semen from any of the champions yet. At one time they did some artificial breeding, then went back to natural breeding.

When looking for new bulls, visual appraisal is based at a 9 in the Forster operation. First they look at appearance and structure; second they look at birthweights. A bull has to have a 70-pound birthweight for use on the heifers. They will go to an 85-pound birthweight for the cows.

Most of the cattle are marketed off the ranch at private treaty. A few head go to the Stockton, Gait, and Cottonwood Livestock Markets. Any sizeable sales go to bonded buyers right off the ranch. Miller Feed Lot, LaSalle, Colo., has been good market and is a repeat buyer.

Even though the weaning weights for the steers average 700 pounds, it was hard for Forster not to recall five years ago when they hit 735 pounds. "Don't know why they were up that year," said Forster, "but it was great!"

The biggest problem Forster has is government and high taxes. "I really don't have any problems with the cattle business other than a dry year once in a while, but you expect that," Forster said. "I think there should be more return on our investment. It might give our

younger generation more reason to want to be in the cattle business. The way it is now, they can get a five-day work week and make more money doing something else."

"I was born in the cattle business and I'll probably die in the cattle business." Forster smiled, "I like it, it's been my life."

Holzappel Ranch

It all started in 1934 when Herb Holzappel's mother was majoring in animal science at the University of California, Davis. She imported five registered Angus, four cows and one bull. They were some of the first black cows to hit California.

Since then it has grown into a major family operation.

Holzappel Ranch consists of 1,600 irrigated acres, including 500 acres of rice, southeast of Willows, Calif., and 8,000 dryland acres close to Arlington, Ore.

The herd of 800 cows is 100 percent Angus.

Holzappel and his father, Gerald, run the ranch with the help of one hired man at each location. In the spring and fall they hire extra help during calving and harvest seasons. Holzappel has a brother who is involved in the operation also. "He's an attorney," states Holzappel. "That comes in pretty handy sometimes."

Holzappel estimates he puts in a 55-hour week, except in the spring and fall when his days grow to 16 hours long. He says, "My wife, Ginger, is the 'main man' around here. She calves all the heifers, does the doctoring, and trains the horses." He has two daughters, one at home and one a freshman at Cal Poly. "They help out, too," he added. Still with their busy schedules, Holzappel finds time to be on the board of directors of the Farmers Rice Cooperative and is a director of the local Production Credit Association.

It was back in 1944 that the Holzapfels bought their last load of Angus heifers. They came from Guthridge Brothers, Prairie City, Ore. At one time, all of the cattle were registered, but because they didn't elect to continue showing, papers were dropped.

They buy bulls through the Red Bluff sale and have purchased some from Bill Borrer, Tehama Angus. However, they raise most of their own bulls in Oregon for use in California.

Performance records are not used on the Holzappel cattle, but they are important in purchasing new bulls. "Even though we don't have much trouble calving, we are considering going to bulls with lighter birthweights," Holzappel says. "We assess all the information

available on prospective bulls, but we feel fertility is the most important.”

Visual appraisal is rated at 10 on a scale of 1 to 10 in their herd.

“We started with Angus cattle and have stayed with them because they have been good to us,” declared Holzapfel. “Especially lately with the new Japanese interest in black cattle.”

In 1988, Japanese buyers bought a load of his steers and two loads of heifers. They paid a ten-cent premium for the heifers and five cents more than the steers brought. “And these were the heifers we selected out, the ones we took to market after we chose our replacements.” Most of their cattle in Oregon go to Japanese buyers.

Like other commercial cattlemen, Holzapfel is interested in the Certified Angus Beef program. He would like to know more what it entails, as he feels it might help him expand his market.

Because the biggest problem he sees with the cattle business is low prices, he works hard at keeping costs down. In California, the cattle are fed rice straw. In Oregon, they are fed rye grass straw with a supplement of cottonseed meal. “Overall, the cattle have done well for us economically.”

Holzapfel Ranch has produced a number of good bulls and lots of good heifers

and has seen a steady increase in weaning weights. Even with that in mind, the goal is to continue improving, especially in the weaning weight category.

The biggest benefit of being in the cattle business, according to Holzapfel, is the “way of life.” That statement seems to be over-used, but “why else would we do it?” he asked.

Robinson Ranch

Dick Pascoe lives on 4,200 acres of dryland called the Robinson Ranch. It is located south of Oakdale, Calif., at Turlock Lake.

He has not pulled a calf in the last six years. “Considering the problems I had in the past,” he declares, “it’s unbelievable!”

His herd of 400 cows consists primarily of Hereford and Brahma crossbreds with a new addition of Brangus he bought from Concar Ranch.

Pascoe has been in the cattle business all of his 63 years.

Even though he has been in the business a long time, he never bought an Angus bull until John Hamilton sold him some. Pascoe looks at the bull’s performance records but mostly goes on Hamilton’s recommendations.

Not only have Angus bulls eliminated the calving problems, the first-calf heifers raise Angus-sired calves with weaning weights right up there with the cows.

He breeds 75 heifers to black bulls each year. He buys 18-month-old bulls and uses them for two years.

“I’m just going to keep improving my herd by culling the bottom end and keeping the top end,” he continued. “I love being in the cattle business: being outdoors, being my own boss, and enjoying my cattle.”

“Besides all that,” Pascoe smiles, “I haven’t had a calving problem since the first day I bought an Angus bull.”

Max Spratling and Sons

Deeth, Nev., between Wells and Elko, is where Max Spratling and his two sons run 1,600 black and black baldie cows.

There are massive dryland pastures and 3,500 acres for haying. The pasture is all crested wheat or mountain pastures.

Spratling has been there for 28 years. He says, “We are getting close to our goal of raising cattle that fit the market and selling them for a premium.”

An 80-hour work week is not uncommon for him even though there are five

people on the payroll. Besides the five, his wife, Joyce, is the bookkeeper, which is almost a full-time job.

Even though Spratling does not keep performance records on his own herd, he studies the performance records of bulls he buys. He looks hard at the yearling weights on EPD but admits to not paying enough attention to birth weights. Because of the attention he pays to yearling weights, Spratling has seen a steady increase through the years.

Visual appraisal is rated a 7 on the Spratling Ranch because they are most interested in pounds.

They buy all of the bulls used on the ranch. A big percentage comes from Bob Thomas. In 1988, they bought 10 head of full and three-quarter brothers out of SCR Lone Star 411 from Four Sum Angus, Wilder, Idaho. Those will be used on the three-year-old cows.

Eighty bulls are used each year. They are separated through the first cycle. After that, when they go into the mountains, they all run together.

"We buy most of our bulls as weaners and feed them out to use as yearlings," states Spratling. "That way they are acclimated. Older bulls do not work for us. They have usually been too pampered. It's rough out here."

The first-calf heifers are kept close to home during calving, but the cows are turned out after they are bred. "We don't see the calves until we brand them." They calf in March, brand in June, and go to the mountains the first of July. "Some of those calves get pretty rank," laughed Spratling.

He uses Angus bulls because he gets a good yearling weight and the calves are easier to sell. They are aggressive and work well on the rugged range of the ranch. "I can't overlook the premium prices we have been getting the last two years, either," he says.

For several years now, their feeders have gone into the feedlot with their eventual destination being Japan. They sold bred heifers to the Japanese for the first time in 1988.

They market cattle into Colorado, but the ones they fatten themselves go into Idaho to Independent Meat Company at Twin Falls, processor for the American Angus Assn.'s CAB program.

"We have had some cattle go through the program, but we didn't feel we received a premium price," complained Spratling. He went on to say, "we have to have more information. We need to know if we are doing it wrong. We want to do it right. We want in on some of those premium prices we hear about."

The thing Spratling likes most about the cattle business is being his own boss.

The drought has been his main concern.

"Actually, we run a pretty classic operation here. Whatever comes, comes," mused Spratling. "There is nothing false about this place."

Duane Martin Livestock

Duane Martin has been in the cattle business all of his life. When he started on his own in 1964, he had 15 head of cows and dreamed of owning a hundred.

Today Martin runs 2,000 mother cows and 8,000 yearlings.

He owns 30,000 acres, mostly dryland, in California and leases about 20 ranches. Two are in Colorado, one is in Oregon. He feeds cattle in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, and California. He has been on the home place near Acampo, Calif., since 1970.

His good friends Pat O'Brien, owner of Oakdale Livestock Auctions, and Heb Reed, owner of West Coast Packing, gave him good advice and encouragement along the way. Martin said, "Without them, I would have probably given up."

Through Martins encouragement, his son is on his own in the business. Both him and Martins daughter are in college and away from home.

Today his operation has grown so much, it put his wife out of work. She used to keep all the books. Now they have a full-time bookkeeper.

Martin says he works 25 hours a day, eight days a week. He has eight or 10 men full-time and some part-time help.

In 1987 and '88, he found time to be on the Brand Committee for the California Cattlemen's Assn. He is a member of the San Joaquin-Stanislas Cattlemen's Assn.

The only performance records Martin keeps on his cattle is the net profit and loss statement. With an operation the size of his, it would be a major effort to keep performance records like those used for a registered herd.

"I don't run registered cattle because I'm not into the show ring," says Martin. "I don't have the patience for it."

Ninety percent of the bulls used in the Martin operation are Angus. He also uses Gelbvieh and Limousins and has one Hereford bull.

He buys his Angus bulls from Concar Ranch and has purchased Gelbvieh bulls from Millers Feedlot in Colorado.

Martin raises most of the replacement heifers. When he needs to buy replacements, he travels a lot looking for the right kind. He purchases many over the phone.

"Gainability is the most important trait I look for when I'm buying a bull," states Martin. "I look at his weaning weight, but most important is the weight he gained from the day he was weaned to the day he was a yearling."

If Martin is buying bulls from Concar visual appraisal is placed at a 7. At Concar he studies the data first, then how the bull looks. "If the bull has good data, and he is only a 7 in looks, I'll buy him," says Martin. "But if his performance is a 4 and he looks like a 10, I'll pass him." When looking for bulls at some place besides Concar, Martin says the visual appraisal goes up to a 10 because that might be all you have to go on.

Martin sells most of the cattle right off the ranch and they go all over the Western United States. With regular customers, he negotiates the price of the cattle over the phone. Those customers don't see the cattle until they are delivered. "It saves us both a lot of time," he says.

He said, "You probably aren't going to like it when I tell you about my experience with Certified Angus Beef."

"I had a pen of black and black baldie steers in Colorado. I told the people at the feedlot to look into the CAB program. They did and reported back the packing houses would not come out and give them even an extra cent over market price.

"We called around trying to get something going on it but accomplished nothing. Are the wholesalers and the packers the ones getting the money, or the guy who is raising the cattle?"

"We need more information on how to handle our cattle so we are able to participate in the CAB program."

A large debt at the bank and a lot of grief is what Martin says keeps him going.

"Actually though," he said, "the biggest problem with the cattle business is the fluctuating market. Even when times are good, the market will fluctuate 10 cents in a day.

"Everybody thinks things are okay because high is high, but when you sell in numbers like we do, a change from 78 cents to 68 cents in a day costs us a ton of money."

Martin may sound a little surly about how many people get a cut from the live animal to steak on the table, but he says, "I like what I'm doing, but I do get disgusted at times. I must like it, 'cause for damned sure I ain't in it for the money."

Duane Martin started with 15 head of cows and a dream in 1964. Today his dream is a reality

Yolo Land and Cattle Company

Henry Stone, owner of Yolo Land and Cattle Company, used to be a banker. "I swore I would never get back into the cattle business," he declared, "but it gets in your blood."

That was 15 years ago. Today, Stone runs 500 commercial cows in the foothills west of Woodland, Calif.

Stone owns 9,000 acres of dryland between Madison and Woodland and 300 acres of irrigated pasture at Dixon. He has run cattle in Nevada, the Sierra, and most of California and finds the location of his current ranch hard to beat.

The property at Dixon is what brought him back into the cattle business.

He has an interest in a tomato grading system and had to take care of the waste water for one of the Campbell Soup canneries. "We had to have some place to put the water," said Stone. "The highest and best use for cannery water is irrigated pasture." Hence, back to the ranch.

Stone graduated from Cal Poly where he majored in animal husbandry. Right out of college he went to work for the Angus ranch of J.F. McKenny and Sons, King City, Mo. He worked on the show string and showed on the northern cir-

cuit that summer. That was his first real contact with the Angus business.

Sone's cattle are 80 percent-plus black. The herd is mostly Hereford-Angus-Simmental cross cows. "I have always used Angus but tried some others along the way," says Stone. "I've just about tried them all." Stone still has two Hereford bulls that will be gone in 1989, leaving him with Angus bulls exclusively. Stone was in the purebred business at one time but prefers commercial cattle.

Replacement heifers in the Yolo Land and Cattle Company are screened by visual appraisal and weight. They have to weigh 600 pounds at weaning.

Because of the disease Foothills Abortion, Stone is unable to buy heifers or cows, so the selection of outstanding replacements from within the herd is vital.

"If a cow has not been exposed to ticks and she gets bit by one, she will have an aborted calf at seven to eight months." He says, "The only way you get around it is by raising your own replacements." Even so, he still loses three to five percent to Foothill Abortion each year.

Under the circumstances, it's critical Stone use bulls that are known for their maternal traits. "I buy bulls that are sired by bulls that are known maternal producers," he said. "You can find those

kind and can find the kind that produce an above-average 365 WDA. It's hard though. You really have to comb to locate them." He has bought his Angus bulls from Oak Ridge Angus for the last four years.

"It's important for me to get high-ratio individuals from a superior herd like Oak Ridge. Buying bulls out of the better cows out of the better herds, I'm bound to get the best," declared Stone.

He refers to the *Angus Beef Bulletin* as his "Bible" when it comes to buying bulls. "I research the performance records not only of the bulls I buy but of their grandsire and grandam," says Stone. He buys based on the EPD shown in the sire summary. "EPD tells me who the better herds are and who is the better sire. It's been pretty successful for me."

He puts visual appraisal up at 8 or 9, but ratio and EPD are the number one things he looks at. He screens with numbers, then looks at the animal. "I just won't bid on one without the right kind of numbers," he says.

Because Stone's ranch climbs from 300 to 2,500 feet very quickly, he likes Angus bulls. They are aggressive, good travelers, and as he puts it, "They get out there and do the job."

Twelve- to 15-month-old bulls are used for the heifers and 18-month to two-year-olds are used on the cows. Stone is using 31 bulls right now. He uses them for four seasons.

Six years ago, Stone had a bad siege of Trichomoniasis and had to sell all of his older bulls plus 300 cows at a low price. "I got it cleaned up. Even though I don't have any problems now, I check the bulls every year," he said. He also checks all of his open cows with lab tests. "Once you have had it and had to sell half of your cow herd, you know it's not much fun and you don't want it again."

Stone calves his first-calf heifers as two-year-olds. In 1988, the steer calves out of his heifers averaged 652 pounds and the heifer calves averaged 612 pounds. That was better than the herd overall. "If I'm doing that and not having calving problems, I must be buying the right kind of bulls." He quipped, "I'm headed in the right direction."

A three-way cross was Stone's original goal for his herd, but he's backed off on that. He was using Simmental bulls on black whitefaced cows, but found for his country the Simmental gets too big, and she's not as fertile as the Angus cow. "I get a higher return per animal unit by using a medium-sized cow," says Stone. My cows weigh 1,200 pounds with a few at 1,400. The 1,200-pound cow is by far more efficient, particularly the black cow. She will wean a calf just as heavy and will breed back more quickly. For my op-

eration, she is the most efficient.

Since the majority of the cows run in a 5,500-acre field, artificial insemination is out of the question for Stone. To do it would prove much more labor intensive. Besides that, his cows are bred to where 90 percent calve in the first six weeks. "Can't beat that deal with A.I."

It's important to Stone to seek acceptable levels in all the traits because he does not just sell weaner calves, he takes them through the feedlot.

In 1988, the first bunch they sold graded 75 percent Choice. They are going out at 14 to 15 months old with an average weight of 1,075 pounds.

He's been selling finished cattle through local packers, but that's getting tougher all the time because so many are closing.

"I wanted to sell some of the steers through the Certified Angus Beef program that is being heavily promoted by the American Angus Assn.," says Stone, "but I found out the nearest packer is in Twin Falls, Idaho. By the time I ship them up there, any premium I would get would be gone in freight.

"I am going to stick with straight black bulls for awhile," Stone stated. "The Japanese interest in black cattle has created such a demand they are bringing two to three cents more at the auction. The Japanese are willing to pay a premium to get good black cattle."

Stone has one full-time hired man and one part-time. He has three sons but only one is in the business with him. One son attends college at Chico State and the other is not interested in cattle. His wife competes in quarter horse events and recently won high point senior trail horse for the Pacific Coast.

He finds he puts in some 15-hour days but that's not just on the cattle. He has other agri-interests including the tomato grading system.

Stone is chairman of the Sacramento County Production Credit Assn. and is on the board of directors at Woodland Memorial Hospital

Yolo Land and Cattle Company has had its problems with two years of drought, Foothill Abortion, and Trichomoniasis. "I know I could make more money doing something else."

But Henry Stone likes the cattle business.


Entering a New Era

In 1981 when Henry Gardiner of Ashland, Ran., was named BIF Commercial Producer of the Year, he said, "I believe we are entering a new era in Angus cat-

tle breeding. Sire Evaluation is giving us rather precise measurements on the genetic ability of many bulls, and this information is going to improve the breed faster than ever before.

"In a few years, as we get more generations tested and culled, we will have cattle with more genetic predictability than we now have. As this happens, our cattle will become more and more valuable."

Just seven short years later in 1988 at



The *Angus Beef Bulletin* that Henry Stone, Yolo Land and Cattle Company, refers to as his "Bible" is published by the American Angus Assn. to keep the commercial cattle producer using Angus bulls in their operations in touch with the Angus business.

According to the Association's 1988 Annual Report, the *Bulletin* was sent to some 30,000 cattle producers. Each issue included information about the Certified Angus Beef program and how producers can take advantage of it, featured stories on successful commercial cattle producers who use Angus bulls regularly, and other general information about the Association and its programs. The purpose of the *Angus Beef Bulletin* is simply to reinforce the readers' decisions to purchase Angus bulls and to encourage them to continue.

the National Angus Conference in Billings, Mont., Roy Wallace of Select Sires Inc. declared, "The beef cattle breeding business has finally advanced to the stage of science. We now have a good, reliable predictor for evaluating the genetic merit of the animals within a population."

As the commercial cattleman of today look to themselves and their cattle with confidence, they are opening new doors with performance records, Expected Progeny Differences, and Sire Evaluations. The unknowns are becoming fewer. The grip on the saddlehorn is loosening and the future is encouraging.

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