



# Montana Rancher Travels Road to Consistency

**C**onsumers want it. Retailers want it. Restaurateurs want it. Packers want it. And only you, the beef producer, can provide it. It's one of the most important missing components in the beef industry — consistency.

Dallas Currey, operations manager for the Jarden Ranch in Montana, has a specific route charted to find this elusive industry target. And this cattleman is willing to go the extra mile.

"We want bulls whose progeny are consistent," Currey says. "We want bulls with good maternal traits, steer calves with good weaning weights and heifers that produce well in our environment."

Currey doesn't need extremes. Shooting for Angus bulls with "middle of the road" expected progeny differences (EPDs), his basic targets include a +3.5 birth weight, +30 weaning weight, +12 milk and +50 yearling weight.

Currey likes his calves from cows to weigh between 85 and 90 pounds; heifer calves to weigh between 80 and 85 pounds. "We need some birth weight to have sufficient weaning weights in the fall. We can't stand a 60-pound birth weight," he says.

Owned by Donald and Lorraine Jarden, the Jarden Ranch's aggressive road was

paved by Donald's father in 1914. His father walked more than 100 miles to Jordan, Mont., to homestead the ranch. This determination and vision was passed down to Donald who provides consultation to the direction Dallas has chosen.

The ranch has grown to a 400 head cow-calf operation. Cows are wintered on cake and winter wheat straw. First calf

performance-proven Angus bulls," says Currey. The AI program allows them to discover bulls which can consistently work with their cow herd and in their environment.

Shortly after he started the AI program, Currey became involved in carcass testing for sire evaluation. He began by testing a couple bulls for Tri State Breeders. By spring

to commercial producers in this area," he says.

This cattleman's reasons for collecting carcass data are three-fold: First, to help collect data for more bulls; second, to find out what his cow herd is producing; and third, to select bulls that will enable him to produce cattle fitting industry demands.

"To obtain the overall con-



*Dallas Currey, left, with Jarden Ranch owners Lorraine and Donald Jarden.*

heifers are fed hay through calving, which begins March 1.

Dallas focused on the drive to consistency about five years ago when he started an artificial insemination (AI) program. "We started it due to economics. We felt we could get more calf for our dollars by using

1995, he will have helped gather carcass data for more than 15 bulls.

Currey also likes to test bulls for local breeders in the area. "I feel it's a service we can provide to them, in return for what they have done to produce good genetics and make bulls accessible

sistency I want in the cow herd, I need carcass data to show me which cows are not performing," explains Currey. "Carcass testing will let us find what carcass EPDs we need in our herd and build upon them in future generations."

Currey's first experience in

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carcass data collection was a positive one. The data revealed 92 percent of his steers graded USDA Choice and Prime, with 50 percent qualifying as Certified Angus Beef™ product.

Still, he admits, data collection can sometimes be frustrating due to the variables. "We need more accessibility to feeders where retained ownership is not required and identification can be maintained," Currey says.

"The Certified Angus Beef Program has played a vital role in helping in this area. It is a quality program run by quality people," he adds.

**While Currey has driven** many miles on the road to consistency, he is still looking for a reward. "I hope the industry and the CAB Program will work toward a system of reward

for top quality carcasses and information exchange," he says.

With the continued growth

and success of the CAB Program, Angus producers can be assured that, if they drive to-

ward consistency, reward will be right around the bend.

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