

Iowan Roger Jauer strives for functional, practical Angus cattle, and realizes...



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Ask almost any seedstock producer about breeding program goals and the answer will likely include some mention of calving ease, strong maternal traits, fertility and, of course, performance.

Ask Roger Jauer and he will talk about each of those, but will carefully stress his own concerns regarding fleshing ability, muscle thickness and moderate mature size.

"I feel it's the responsibility of the purebred producer to look for and try to correct problems," says Jauer. "And I believe our beef industry has some serious ones. I'm afraid too many Angus herds have lost the very things that made Angus so good. As breeders we should be trying to correct that instead of creating new problems."

Jauer says the popular objectives have been heavier weaning and yearling weights. Both purebred and commercial producers have been

Conditioned to believe bigger, or at least taller, is better. He believes that single-minded approach overlooks function and produces cattle that require more management and are therefore less efficient.

"While pursuing excessive growth, we've sacrificed fleshing ability, fertility and calving ease," Mauer adds. "Those are functional traits. Lose those and you and your cattle have to be babied along. Maintenance cost go up. stress goes up and cost you peace of mind."

Jauer Angus Farm is located in northwestern Iowa, near the small community of Hinton. The family Angus herd has established in 1961 by Roger's father, Glen Jauer. Roger assumed management in 1969. He and his wife, Karen, have four children. Deanna and Kurt are still in high school and Brant is a freshman at Iowa State University studying pre-veterinary medicine.

STORY & PHOTOS BY TROY SMITH

Eldest son. Doug, is an Iowa State Graduate and recently returned to the family operation.

This region offers testimony that not all of Iowa is flat, black earth devoted to bin-busting yields of corn and soybeans. They do raise those crops in northwestern Iowa, but this is hilly country where farming is done on the contour, utilizing terraces to slow runoff. About 80 percent of the land is cultivated for row crops. The roughest ground is in small pastures, particularly the creek-bottoms.

Jauer cattle must survive on high roughage rations. Pastures produce cool season grasses with brome being the dominant species. Winter forage consists of crop residues, oat and alfalfa haylage plus forage sorghum silage. Jauer says the environment demands cattle be the easy fleshing kind.

"So many cow herds today are nearly void of fleshing ability. Some producers are realizing that, and they are wanting to put back some volume and muscle thickness," says Jauer. "But a lot of people still are reluctant to do what it takes to make those changes. Reducing frame size isn't the only solution, but bulls that can correct some of these basic problems are going to be more moderate in stature."

That philosophy remains unacceptable to many cattlemen and particularly among many of Jauer's fellow breeders. Unafraid of controversy, he takes the heat undaunted. Jauer is convinced the answer lies not in maximum growth but optimum growth from highly functional cattle.

"It can be done," he says, believing his own operation serves as an example.

"We made some of the same mistakes ourselves," Jauer explains. "Everyone likes heavy weaning calves, and to get them we bred for high milk production. The results were had-keeping females and udder problems. We learned adequate milk is better than high milk. Milk expected progeny difference (EPD) of 8 to 15 is probably adequate."

Still, Roger Jauer has steered clear of the extremes. Bulls strong in maternal bulls of the breed, like Rito 149, Traveler 23-4 and Tehama Bando, says Roger, you find they are phenotypically moderate for frame size.

"Those are primary considerations, but the right genetics can provide fast, early growth too," he adds. "There are a few bulls out there that can do it. One that has put us a lot closer to where we



The Ideal Corn Belt Female

want to see is DHD Traveler 6807. We're putting his daughters back in our cow herd and his sons are selling well to serious cattlemen trying to correct problems of their own."

The Jauer cows weigh 1,200 to 13,50 pounds when mature, but the ideal low-maintenance, cost-efficient cow Jauer strives for would fall in the lower end of the range. All 300 head (cows and heifers) are artificially inseminated (AI) for one heat service with conception rates running from 70 to 75 percent. Clean-up bulls are selected every bit as carefully as AI sires, with the same emphasis upon maternal traits. The same bulls used on cows are also used on heifers. EPDs are a much-used tool with a lot of pressure placed on calving ease. However, Jauer is quick to mention that he never picks a calving ease bull that doesn't have much muscling.

"Too many of the breed's calving ease bulls are too refined. They lack volume and thickness and usually have to be helped along with extra feed," Jauer says.

Born during February, heifers' calves average 75 pounds at birth while March and April-born calves out of cows average 85 pounds. After weaning in October, the calves are grown with gains targeted at 3 to 3.25 pounds. After high-roughage rations.

"We catch some static from some Iowa producers for not pushing our bulls calves harder," Jauer says. "They like to see bulls gaining 4 pounds, but that just over conditions them. What we're doing seems to work for our market area which includes commercial producers in Nebraska and South Dakota. We

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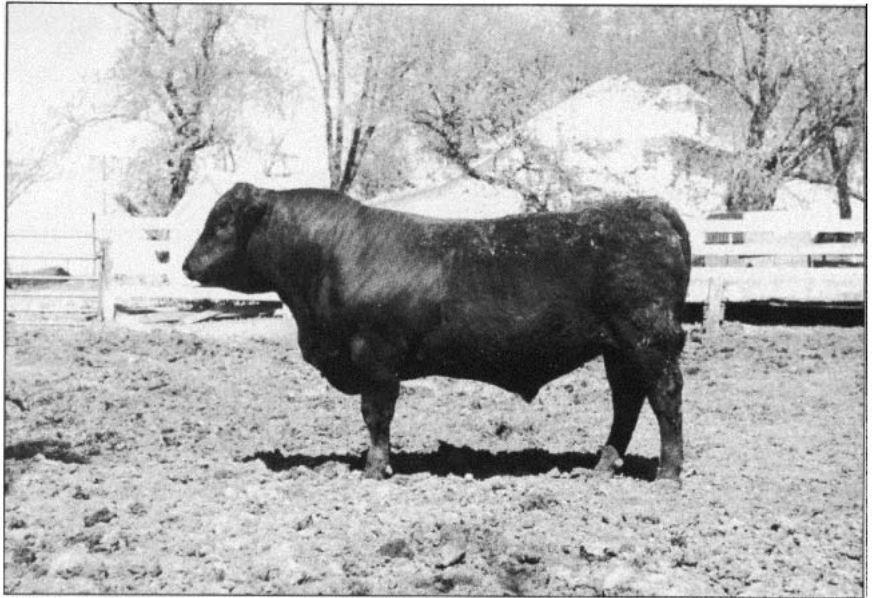
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sell 65 to 70 bulls through our annual sale and 65 percent of the buyers are repeat customers. They are buying those thick, 5 to 5.5 frame bulls. The bulls work for them."

Some say Jauer's type of cattle don't fit the trend toward production of a leaner beef product. To that he just smiles and shakes his head, saying, "There has to be some middle ground and I think we're getting close. The easy-fleshing cattle do have to be marked in a timely fashion or they put on too much fat cover. It's a matter of marketing them when they are ready."

The Jauer operation includes a farrow-to-finish swine enterprise. Until a few years ago they raised breeding stock too. What Jauer learned from the "long and Lean" tend in hogs strengthens his cattle breeding philosophy. He says fertility was very real problem as hogs became less functional.

Relatively cheap grain has to be partly to blame for the popularity of bigger, slower maturing cattle, Jauer believes. He's convinced if grain go up, cattle that are efficient on roughage will become essential.



Roger Jauer's newest herd bull is moderate-framed, well muscled and easy fleshing

"Through selection we can produce fertile, early maturing cattle," he says, "We can make them thick while keeping them lean, and we can do it consistently. With some work, I think we can have it all."

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