

OUTLOOK CONFERENCE 1979

PERFORMANCE ENTHUSIASTS SPEAK OUT

Selection of bulls and females based on sound production records, understanding the needs of the customer and knowing what constitutes an ideal beef carcass are the foundation of a successful breeding program for the purebred cattleman. These must be supported with a sound advertising and merchandising plan.

This, in brief, was the message delivered at the National Angus Outlook Conference July 1, 2 and 3 at Colorado State University in Ft. Collins. The program, sponsored by the American Angus Assn., attracted more than 400 cattlemen from 37 states, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and England.

Al Smith, manager of Neuhoff Farms, Inc., Dublin, Va., set the tone for the conference when he outlined the needs of a profit-oriented commercial cattleman. He told the group, "There is no need to gamble on the quality of your calf crop if you buy bulls with predictable performance and breed them to good cows."

Fanatic on Performance

"I am a fanatic on performance testing and performance records," Smith, manager of a large commercial cattle operation, emphasized. "...one of the big needs that the seed stock man has is to keep as good as or better records than I do. We record birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight, carcass weight, average daily gain, frame size, conformation, muscling and soundness scores."

Smith also counseled registered breeders to

resist the temptation to keep unsatisfactory bulls just because prices are high. "I would urge you not to lower your standards....to keep your castrating blades sharp and in use."

(The entirety of Smith's speech follows this report.)

Productive Performance

Dr. R.A. Bellows, head of the Livestock and Range Research Station, Miles City, Mont., advised that top productive performance is the key to higher calf crop percentages.

"Failure of the female to become pregnant during the breeding season accounted for 60% of the total reduction in net calf crop" (in tests conducted at the research station), Dr. Bellows told the group. He showed results of research in three herds in which the herd with the lowest average weaning weight was the most productive due to high reproductive performance and a 97% calf crop.

The goal in managing for reproduction should be early puberty, with heifers calving as 2-year-olds early in the calving season. Dr. Bellows pointed out that such heifers calve earlier and wean heavier calves throughout their lives. He then discussed the effects of genetics, nutrition, calving ease and age of dam on reproductive performance.

Birth Weights

In another part of the program, Dr. Larry Cundiff of the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center, Clay Center, Neb., told the group that, although birth weights are not easy to measure, registered cattle breeders should record them because of

their economic importance. He said birth weights are correlated to both gestation length and calving difficulty.

Selecting for lower birth weight will reduce gestation length, Dr. Cundiff pointed out. On the other hand, selection for greater mature weight is closely correlated with heavier birth weight. Both birth weight and gestation length are highly heritable, about 44% and 45% respectively, he said.

There are several factors other than genetics that control birth weights, the Clay Center researcher explained. Older cows have heavier calves. Fall calves average 4-5 lb. lighter than spring calves.

Performance and Sire Selection

According to Roy Wallace, director of beef programs for Select Sires, Inc., Plain City, Ohio, a set of clearly defined goals is the cattleman's most useful tool.

Wallace, whose presentation concerned performance selection relative to sire selection, puts heavy emphasis on the economically important traits—growth, calving ease, maternal traits, frame size and show ring appeal.

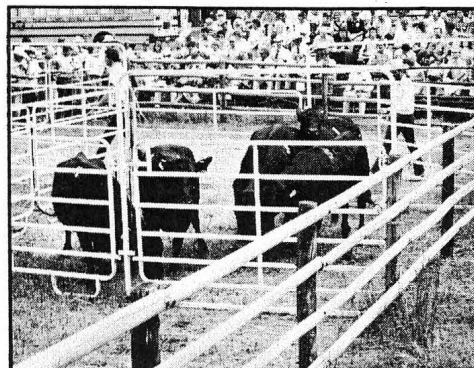
Yearling weight, Wallace said, is the most important measure of growth in beef cattle. "If a bull has 100 progeny records, our records show that his own records are about 63% accurate. If the bull's sire has 100 progeny with data, the accuracy goes up another 7%. If the dam of the bull has information on at least four calves, that adds another 3% accuracy. With all this information, we can be about 73% accurate in our selection of young bulls," Wallace said.

But Wallace cautioned that the perfect bull has not yet been bred. "Growth, maternal traits and calving ease do not always come in the same package," he pointed out.

Maternal Selection

"Selection for maternal traits is not based on females that are the most feminine or the prettiest or that have a thin neck that blends in well with the body," Wallace emphasized. He added that Holstein breeders have increased milk production, "which is really what we are talking about," by using bulls with a high predicted difference for milk production on cows that are well above average for milk production and sired by bulls that are superior in milk pro-

Host Colorado State University welcomed a good crowd to judging and selection demonstrations at the CSU farm facilities.



Roy Wallace of Select Sires, Inc., Plain City, Ohio, talked about performance selection of beef sires.

duction prediction. "This is the best way to select young bulls for a breeding program," Wallace contended.

He pointed out that data is available to Angus breeders on performance pedigrees. And with bulls that have more than 100 daughters, the reliability is very accurate.

Wallace predicts that within the next five to 10 years, astute Angus breeders not only will be performance testing but will be using bulls truly superior in growth and maternal traits, stacking those bulls together so the gene pool within their herds will be definitely stronger.

Embryo Transplants

Embryo transplants allow cattle breeders to exert greater female selection intensity, according to Dr. Jim Brinks of Colorado State University (CSU). Though relatively expensive, the procedures for transplanting are well established. Selecting cows for transplants is the problem, according to Dr. Brinks. He urged breeders to use all the records available (Pathfinder Cow reports, Angus Herd Improvement Records) and to consider structural soundness and disposition when selecting cows for transplants. A slide show presentation showing embryo transplant procedures was then presented by Dr. Peter Elsdon, CSU.

"Shaping Carcass Cutability" was the program topic presented by Dr. Robert Taylor of the CSU staff and Dr. Rod Bowling, Monfort of Colorado, using sectioned frozen carcasses. With the sectioned cattle on stage, frozen in a live position, the two men demonstrated how different frame sizes (large, medium and small) affect the way cattle should be finished and how long they should remain on feed, emphasizing

how over-feeding results in wasted money.

Further Evidence

Later in the day, Dr. Art Litton and Jim Gibb, both of CSU, carried this theme one step further. Using live cattle and the results of a recently completed CSU research project, they showed how frame size and growth curves determine when an animal has reached choice grade without putting on too much waste fat. When all sizes were fed to the same slaughter weight, the larger-framed cattle were leaner and produced carcasses with higher cutability than did smaller-framed cattle. However, it was pointed out that large cattle tend to have less marbling and a lower quality grade.

Litton and Gibb cautioned that frame size is associated with mature size, meaning that the larger-framed cattle in a breeding herd have higher daily nutrient requirements and probably reach sexual maturity at a later age.

Merchandising

Merchandising purebred cattle was the theme of the conference's Tuesday morning session, where a classic sales film was used to demonstrate the mathematics of "How to Sell Quality."

A panel comprised of three Angus breeders and a sale manager discussed adding value to registered Angus cattle through good breeding and merchandising. Lyle Haring, regional manager for the American Angus Assn. for 26 years, moderated as panel members emphasized that the basis for adding value to breeding cattle was a sound breeding program.

Panel Discussion

Panel member Bob Sitz, Harrison, Mont., pointed out that he sells 200 bulls at auc-



Pat Goggins, Billings, Mont., auctioned off the first five signed prints of Frank Murphy's new Angus bull art.

tion in a few hours thanks to a large percentage of repeat of customers. Cattle that perform well in his buyers' herds bring customers back. Sitz said he delivers almost every bull himself, both to show interest in buyers' herds and to see how his bulls will be used.

Mark Richardson, manager of Sayre Farms, Phelps, N.Y., explained that he uses a strong advertising and merchandising program to sell cattle. He exhibits extensively at major shows and consigns top cattle to sales, highlighting his firm's quality and breeding program as well as building customer interest.

Milo Wolrab, a third panelist, has a small herd at Mt. Vernon, Iowa. He sells most of his cattle to neighbors through his production sale. He stressed the need for honesty and the need to provide well-bred cattle that are products of a sound record program.

Jim Danekas, former manager of Western States Angus Assn., Roseville, Calif., explained that providing service to members had built the western association. Danekas, who is starting a new sale management service, stressed that service adds value to the products cattlemen sell.

Second Breeder Panel

A second panel of successful Angus breeders, moderated by association

A good many program and social activities took place outdoors on the scenic CSU campus.



The Certified Angus Beef program was explained by Director Louis "Mick" Colvin.

regional manager Bill Roche, discussed their programs and methods of merchandising.

Dave Pingrey, Benton, Miss., emphasized the need to breed and feed cattle suited to the area in which customers live.

Bill Borrer, Gerber, Calif., explained that using performance records has built quality and reputation for his cow herd. He advised the use of central bull test stations to enhance a breeder's reputation for producing quality cattle.

Another panelist, Larry Cotton of Fowlerville, Mich., manages the registered herd at Premier Beef Cattle as part of a completely integrated program. He has a broad mer-

chandising program to develop markets—from junior heifer projects to exports. His operation has used embryo transplants extensively and has developed a range bull marketing program in Nebraska.

Pat Goggins, Billings, Mont., auctioneer and registered Angus breeder, explained that his program is based on selling all the cattle he produces—not just a few top individual animals. Tall cattle, he added, don't weigh more but long cattle do.

Final Program

The final afternoon's program included an explanation of the Certified Angus Beef program by Louis "Mick" Colvin, program director, after which the ANGUS JOURNAL was introduced by General Manager Mike Sweet.

Climax of the conference was the Angus art auction that earned \$3,700 to help support passage of the Beferendum. The first five of 200 signed and numbered framed prints of the Frank C. Murphy painting featured on the cover of the July ANGUS JOURNAL were sold.

The first print sold for \$800 to Mr. & Mrs. Frank Schiefelbein of Schiefelbein Angus Farms, Kimball, Minn. Edward E. Rishel of Rishels Edlyn Farm, Glen Rock, Pa., purchased the second print for \$750. The third and fourth prints also brought \$750, selling to Patrick J. Mullady of Picket Fence Farm, Grayslake, Ill., and George Spencer, executive vice president of the National Cattlemen's Assn. Spencer bought the painting for Tom Cook, also with NCA, who formerly worked for the American Angus Assn. Bill Rishel of Rishel Livestock Services, North Platte, Neb., bought the fifth and last painting for \$650. 