



## North Dakota Ranch One Step Ahead of Beef Industry

Collecting carcass data is a fairly new production and marketing strategy for cattle producers. The exception is those pioneers who had the foresight to realize the benefits several years ago.

The Brooks family Bowman, N.D., is one of those pioneers. Since the early 1950s, Brooks have been tracking carcass information on their cattle. Their initial interest was a result of their tie to marketing the end product. At that time, the family processed and sold the beef as halves or quarters in their own locker plant located on the ranch.

Although the Brooks no longer process their own cattle, the importance of carcass data collection is a business value passed down through three generations of ranchers. Brothers Steve and Ryan, along with cousin Rob, now operate the Brooks ranch started by their grandfather in 1930.

Ranching responsibilities are divided among the partners. Steve oversees the 400-head registered Angus cow herd. The farming operation, which includes hay production and small grain crops of oats, barley and wheat, is managed by Ryan. Rob is responsible for the 400-head commercial herd which is used to test bulls for carcass data.

The Brooks started using Angus in 1941 and incorporated artificial insemination (AI) into their program in 1964. Throughout the years, they have strived to gather carcass information through various means.

During the early '70s, Steve and Ryan's father used the USDA orange tag system to track cattle. To obtain carcass information during the '80s, the Brooks fed the cattle and sold them grade and yield.

Since the start of the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program's supply development division, data has been much easier to come by and is more complete, Steve says. Discussion about value-based marketing during the '80s spurred the Brooks to place even more emphasis on progeny evaluation of bulls.

"When we started to see value differences in types of carcasses, we wanted to learn which bulls were producing what," Steve says.

In developing their cow herd, the



*Steve Brooks is working hard on his North Dakota ranch to keep ahead of beef industry changes and anticipate customer needs.*

Brooks first stressed growth and maternal traits. After that was accomplished, they began refining birth weights and udder structure. "We still won't use a bull with an expected progeny difference (EPD) for yearling weight under +50 pounds," Steve says. "We like to have birth weight EPD in the 1 to 3 pound range. This really limits bulls we can use."

Steve and his partners are strong believers in culling. Any cow that doesn't raise a calf goes to slaughter. This includes both the registered and commercial herds. "It doesn't matter if a cow

raised a \$5,000 bull calf the year before, she has to have one every year, or she goes to town," Steve says.

In regards to bull selection, the Brooks look at most of the other traits first. After they have narrowed the list down to bulls whose females will work in our environment, they select the bull that also has the best progeny carcass traits.

The Brooks believe it is important to supply their bull customers with as much information as possible about performance, maternal and carcass traits. Their bull customers, especially those who re-

### Time to Enroll Sires

The American Angus Association and the Certified Angus Beef Program have designed the Angus Sire Evaluation program for progeny carcass merit to benefit both commercial and seedstock producers.

Now is the time to enroll your bull in the program. Several commercial cooperating herds are looking for bulls to use in their testing programs.

A seedstock producer who would like to have a sire evaluated for progeny carcass merit should provide the name and registration number of the potential test sire to Larry Dorsey or John Crouch. The sire owner should be willing to provide adequate semen to the cooperating herd from the test sire, as well as two reference sires, to produce a contemporary group of approximately 20 to 25 steer progeny. The CAB Program will track the steers through feeding and processing to obtain the carcass data.

For more information contact: Larry Dorsey (406) 763-4366 or John Crouch (816) 233-3101.

tain ownership, are beginning to show more interest in carcass traits. In response to this increased interest, the Brooks will be supplying interim EPDs for carcass traits in their sale catalog. In addition, between weaning and sale time, they cull one-third of their bull calves — only selling the best.

**At least eight bulls** are listed in the Spring '93 Angus Sire Evaluation Report that the Brooks have tested in their herd for carcass EPDs. In addition, there are another 10 bulls which have helped increase their carcass EPD accuracy value through progeny testing. Over time, the Brooks have used more than 30 bulls with carcass EPDs.

Steve has enjoyed a positive relationship with Schurrtop Angus of Nebraska and Basin-Stevenson Angus of Montana in their efforts to gather carcass data on a jointly-owned bull.

"It's cooperation like this that can help the Angus business advance at a faster rate," says Steve. He would like to see all bulls tested for progeny carcass data where semen will be used outside of the owner's herd.

As the Brooks look toward the future, their philosophy is simple: "Our bottom line is to stay abreast of industry changes and raise cattle economically," Steve says.

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"We're not trying to raise the heaviest calves, but ones moderate in all traits that will make the most money for our customers."

Focusing on customers expectations has kept the Brooks one step ahead in the competitive beef business. Future generations of the family, as well as many other beef producers, will continue to reap the benefits of these North Dakota pioneers.

— **Larry Dorsey & Jenny Stickley**

## Certified Angus Beef™ product — the perfect gift

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