

LEAD IN

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Most would agree that emphasis on size has dramatically changed growth patterns and size of Angus cattle in recent years. Even to the point that a correlated trait, like birth weight, has taken a back seat in many breeding decisions.

Over the years many other Angus breeders have ceased to promote their bulls for the traditional calving ease trait altogether. And, it may be costing us valuable sales.

Based upon research conducted at two independent universities, the average Angus bull sires calves that produce no more calving problems in yearling heifers than do Longhorn-sired calves.

The most recent work was done at the San Joaquin Experimental Range and presented at Cattlemen's Day 1985 at California State University—Fresno. The report stated simply that, "general trends indicate no difference in calving ease, birth weight or percent live calves between Angus and Longhorn-sired calves." The tests were run on yearling crossbred heifers that were eleven to fourteen months of age when bred.

"However," the report went on, "rather marked contrasts between (the two) breeds were observed in feedlot and carcass performance." The Angus-sired carcasses weighed 589 pounds compared to 528 pounds for the Longhorns. The carcass price was \$99.40 per cwt. for the Angus compared to \$97.50 for the Longhorns, which made the Angus-sired cattle worth \$74 more per head: \$581 compared to \$517.

The Angus bulls used in these tests weren't selected for their calving ease trait. Which goes to show that a lot of Angus breeders, perhaps most, who are keeping birth weights on their calves and monitoring birth weight

EPDs on sires they use through the National Sire Evaluation Program could and should be actively promoting at least part of their bull crop for use on first-calf heifers.

There is a market out there. The economic losses that result from calving difficulties are not limited to first-calf heifers. And, they take a significant cut from the average cattle producers' profits each year. Yet the research still in progress in California, as well as work done over few years at Montana State University, show that Angus can cut these losses to a minimum and also produce a more valuable, more profitable slaughter animal.

Research reported on at Cattlemen's Day documented some other Angus bull advantages. Calves sired by Angus bulls had an average gestation length of 280 days compared with 289 days for Brahman. Herefords averaged 284 days and Simmental 285 days.

The shorter Angus gestation length is one factor that produces smaller calves at birth. The Angus birth weights averaged 73 pounds compared to 83 pounds for Hereford and Brahman and 82 pounds for Simmental. Of course, the lighter weights and the earlier calving means that the cows bred to Angus bulls will recycle faster and settle sooner, which means heavier weaned calves the following year.

These facts aren't surprising to any of us. However, they should serve to remind us again of the added benefits that Angus provide to the commercial cattle industry and encourage us to promote them actively. In these times of reduced cattle numbers and increased competition, we need to exploit every possible market. **AJ**