



Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

A missed opportunity

As Angus members, we pride ourselves on the lengths to which we go to educate our youth. No other breed organization and few other youth programs provide as many opportunities to develop leadership, public speaking, showmanship and salesmanship skills. But, are we missing a great opportunity to teach a little cow savvy?

Missing targets

As we made our way home from the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, Ky, I couldn't help but think that we are missing an opportunity by not designing junior shows to educate our young cattlemen as to proper development of the heifers that will compose the foundation of their herds.

Our youth learn so much more about the industry by competing in the carcass contest of the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), where real industry targets are the goal, than from competing in heifer shows. We have no such targets in the female show, though I will compliment junior show judge Kyle Rozeboom, Dresden, Tenn., and Roll of Victory (ROV) show judge Jack Ward, Plattsburg, Mo., for doing an excellent job of penalizing poor leg structure, overconditioning and extreme body size.

In the educational forum in Louisville, Tom Brink of Five Rivers Ranch Cattle Feeding LLC shared that the largest feeder in the U.S. wants to feed cattle that are approximately 50%-75% Angus, 25%-50% Continental. The reason that ideal isn't straightbred Angus is because those feeders feel they need a 25% Continental influence to

avoid Yield Grade (YG) 4 discounts at a 1,300-pound (lb.) end weight. So, why would we showcase fat cattle?

In the real world, the average 2-year-old Angus heifer with a body condition score (BCS) of 5.5-6 weighs less than 1,100 lb. How many 15-month-old heifers in Louisville topped that? Were they oversized, overconditioned or both? Certainly, teaching youth to select extreme size and/or to overfeed a heifer to compete teaches the wrong lesson.

The NJAS carcass contest has that grid target. Can a show platform be constructed that would educate youth as to the targets for ideal heifer development and reward them for reaching those targets?

Let's consider an April 2004 heifer being shown at a mid-November junior show. At 19 months of age, what should she weigh?

Universities have long preached that a heifer should reach 65% of her mature weight by breeding at 14-15 months of age and 85% of her mature weight by calving at 23-24 months of age. If the average 7- to 8-year-old Angus cow weighs 1,350 lb. at a BCS of 5.5-6.0, she would need to weigh 878 lb. by the time she was 14-15 months old — let's say June 15, 2005, for our April 2004

heifer. That same heifer would need to weigh 1,148 lb. by April 1, 2006. That means she would need to gain 270 lb. from breeding to calving.

If Angus cows have a typical gestation length of 278-280 days, she would need to gain about a pound a day from breeding to calving. On that growth rate, she'd need to weigh about 1,025 lb. in mid-November.

We know that underfeeding heifers can delay puberty and reduce conception rates; overfeeding can reduce conception, impair milking ability and reduce profitability. While 1,350 lb. is the average size of a mature Angus cow, university folks have given commercial producers a target mature cow weight of 1,100-lb.

Can we structure a junior show to incorporate realistic lessons in heifer development? If your state association does, let me know. We'll do our best to attend and feature your educational efforts in the *Angus Journal*.

Range Beef Cow Symposium

Don't miss Angus Production Inc.'s (API's) online coverage of the Range Beef Cow Symposium XIX at www.rangebeefcow.com. The Dec. 6-8 conference is sponsored by the Extension services and animal science departments of South Dakota State University, Colorado State University, the University of Wyoming and the University of Nebraska. It is an excellent educational program, steeped in practical production management information.

Don't miss outreach seminars

The American Angus Association is planning several outreach seminars. See page 167 for more information.

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