

Field Notes

► by David Gazda and Jared Murnin, regional managers, American Angus Association

Tips for selling bulls at home

While production sales are becoming more numerous, a large percentage of bulls are still sold at home by private treaty. American Angus Association regional managers David Gazda and Jared Murnin offer tips for effectively selling bulls by private treaty.

How do I inform people that I have bulls to sell by private treaty?

Jared Murnin: One way to inform people that you have bulls for sale is to do a direct mailing to your past buyers and potential customers. The mailing should include a personal letter telling people about your program, the bulls you have to offer this year and the date that the bulls will be ready for viewing and purchase. You can also include a list of bulls in the offering with pedigrees, expected progeny differences (EPDs), and individual performance and carcass information.

You should also advertise in publications like the *Angus Beef Bulletin*, or list offerings through the Bull Listing Service (BLS), available at www.angus.org/bls/bls_info.html, to recruit new customers. The *Angus Beef Bulletin* is a great place to advertise Angus bulls for sale. It is mailed to more than 90,000 Angus bull buyers across the country.

Regional livestock publications

are also a good way to reach commercial cattlemen in your area.

David Gazda: A postcard, flyer, video or DVD mailed to past customers is a simple and cost-effective means of announcing and previewing the availability of bulls for sale by private treaty. Your state cattlemen's association publication and your state Angus association newsletter are also excellent ways to contact both commercial and purebred breeders. Communication with other key individuals would include your county Extension agent, local veterinarian, sale barn owner/operator and regional manager. Finally, advertising in the *Angus Journal*, the official breed publication; the *Angus Beef Bulletin*; and/or BLS are all cost-effective means of reaching prospective bull customers.

How can I best showcase my bulls on the farm?

Gazda: First, bulls should be developed so they are in appropriate body condition for their age. Secondly, bulls should be clean, free of any external parasites

and clearly identified with an ear tag or brand. In addition, bulls should be displayed outdoors in grass or dirt lots of ample size that allow for the unobstructed viewing of an animal's feet and legs. Finally, bulls should be penned according to age and price. Bulls that have previously been sold or are not for sale should be removed and relocated to another area of the operation.

Murnin: Some people in my area have had success selling bulls when they display them next to a roadway with a sign saying "Bulls for Sale" with their phone number. These people put the bulls in that pasture or large pen when they are ready to sell them. It is very important that the bulls are presented in a well-kept area with lots of room to roam. By giving bulls lots of space, buyers can see them move. I also recommend you take the bulls out of the pen and put them in another location once they are sold.

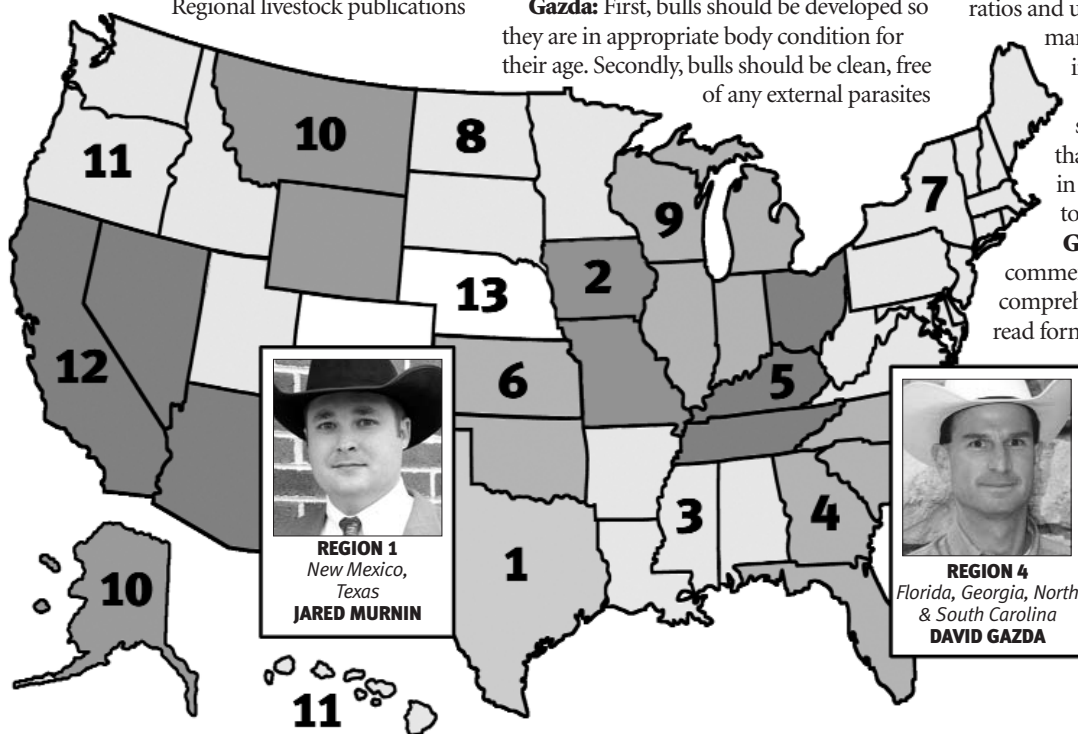
What type of information should I present to commercial bull customers? Is there a good way to present this information?

Murnin: I recommend providing your commercial bull customers with as much information as you can in a concise and easy-to-follow format. Some of the information to include is pedigree, EPDs, individual weights, ratios and ultrasound information. There are many options on how to present this information, and they can range from a simple spreadsheet to a sale book. The important thing is that customers have the information in their hands so they can refer back to it when needed.

Gazda: Information presented to commercial bull customers should be comprehensive and presented in an easily read format, such as those developed by

the Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) program. Custom formats can be created by Crystal Report Writer or Microsoft® Access as well. Information on each individual should include:

- birth date;
- three-generation pedigree;
- performance data (birth weight, adjusted weaning and yearling weight);



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- ▶ performance test data (if applicable);
- ▶ actual and adjusted ultrasound data;
- ▶ adjusted yearling scrotal circumference (SC);
- ▶ adjusted yearling hip height (optional);
- ▶ complete EPDs for growth, maternal, carcass and ultrasound, as well as dollar value indexes (\$Values);
- ▶ dam's production record;
- ▶ dam's ultrasound production record;
- ▶ vaccination program; and
- ▶ results of breeding soundness exams (optional).

Information should be placed in a report folder and separated according to age (yearlings, 2-year-olds, herd bulls, etc.). Bulls should be listed in numerical order that corresponds to a visual ear tag or brand. Information on bulls that have been sold or that are no longer available should be removed from the folder.

Stopping the daily work plan to show a potential customer a set of bulls can, at times, be frustrating. Are there options to avoid this?

Gazda: When visiting with potential bull customers by phone, e-mail, etc., one should first determine their bull needs. Discussion points should include desired age, pedigree, EPDs, number of bulls required and price. Once accomplished, both parties can then objectively determine whether a visit to the farm would be productive. This approach results in almost entirely eliminating those totally unproductive visits, and it also tends to uncover those breeders we've all encountered who are merely "kicking tires"

or looking for what they like to refer to as a "bargain."

If a visit is deemed appropriate, try to schedule the visit to coincide with that time of the workday you are normally feeding or checking the bulls or working in that area of the farm. This eliminates any unnecessary trips and saves valuable time.

Once a visit has been scheduled, time permitting, send the customer a complete listing of bulls offered, including all pertinent information. Do this so they may study the bulls in advance, allowing them to remove those bulls from consideration that do not meet their criteria.

Finally, prior to the customer's arrival, pen bulls according to age and price in display pens that allow for quick and unobstructed viewing of the bulls. Again, this is a simple but effective measure breeders can employ to expedite the selection and sale processes.

Murnin: While stopping the daily work flow can be frustrating and time-consuming, it can also be an advantage for you to serve your customers better. You can use this time to get to know your customer on an individual basis, to find out about your customer's program and help the customer select the best bull for his or her program.

One option to avoid this is to have an open house. You can pen the bulls according to price range, or you can provide customers with individual prices. You can sell the bulls on a first-come, first-serve basis, or you can close the bidding at a certain time. If more than one person is interested in a particular bull, you can have a bid-off. This option allows you to sell a majority, or even all, of your bulls in one day and can eliminate the added time it takes to show customers bulls on an individual basis.

