



Angus Stakes

► by Shauna Rose Hermel, editor

Taking care of the basics

There's been no shortage of meetings to attend this fall to get the inside scoop on how to recover from drought, advocate for agriculture, make the most of your forage resources or health program, etc., etc. A recurrent theme in this era of high input costs, however, is to make sure you are taking care of the basics. Maybe not as new and interesting as the latest gadget, those "basics" provide the platform from which the new-fangled stuff can be successful.

Example

For instance, mineral nutrition doesn't seem like a big deal, but it underpins vaccine response, reproductive rates, herd health and the thriftiness of those calves when they are born. We're even learning that they probably help turn genes on and off.

I love that kind of stuff. Just think, the Good Lord set up a system so self-sustaining that it shuts off certain genes when feed resources are scarce, allowing the cow a better chance to survive. Those genes can be turned back on when the environment is plush, essentially establishing a new bar for potential performance.

We have so much to learn in this area, and we will learn, but the fact of the matter is if you take care of the basics and provide a good mineral nutrition program, you are setting your herd up for success in a multitude of ways. In the end, it provides better welfare for the animal, less work for the caretaker and, hopefully, a more positive bottom line.

To put it in other terms, you can teach

that dog all sorts of calls, buy the most accurate rifle, dress in the lightest-weight warmest gear technology allows and buy the highest-performance dog food in the country, but if you don't put feed in the dish, that dog isn't going to hunt.

It just makes sense

I guess that's why one of my favorite presentations at the Applied Reproductive Strategies in Beef Cattle (ARSBC) symposium in Sioux Falls, S.D., was one by Eric Mousel, who has moved in just north of us as chairman of the Department of Agricultural Sciences at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville. The take-home message I got from his presentation, the summary for which is presented on page 156, was that while we wait for technologies to help us improve reproductive efficiency, let's not forget the most basic.

The simplest way to select for longevity and reproductive efficiency, Mousel said, is to select for those heifers that calve in the first 21

days of the calving season. From a seedstock producer's perspective, I'd add, take note of the sires of those heifers that calve in the first 21 days — in your herd, but especially in the herds of your commercial customers.

We'll bring you more coverage (the technical and basic, of course) of the ARSBC meeting in the February *Angus Journal*. Or, you can go high-tech and access coverage online at www.appliedreprostrategies.com. Coverage of this year's meeting is in the newsroom for the Sioux Falls symposium.

Give us your input

We're going to make sure we keep our eye on the basics with the *Angus Journal*, as well. After the holidays, we'll conduct a short readership survey. If you'll devote 10 minutes of your time to let us know what information you want to read in your *Journal* and some information regarding your current reading habits, we'll make sure we're filling the pages of the magazine with information to meet your needs and offering the information in the format you want.

We'll likely mail the survey to a random sample of readers, but we'll make a link available from our home page, www.angusjournal.com, so the survey is available to all of our readers.

Happy New Year!

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