



Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

Define your breeding program

Adventurists might set out on a course with no destination in mind, letting the experience direct them wherever. When it comes to designing the breeding program upon which you are staking your family's livelihood, that probably isn't the most bankable approach.

Refine your target

To market your operation effectively, you have to define what product it is that you are selling. If Angus bulls is your answer, you are likely not reaching your potential. Customers have a lot of options, and finding seedstock suppliers who can consistently meet their needs earns premiums.

We often hear complaints that there are too many expected progeny differences (EPDs) and dollar value indices (\$Values), making it harder to raise a top bull because it is extremely difficult to top all EPD categories. Such comments generally indicate an undefined breeding program.

Are you raising show prospects or replacement heifers? Are you raising bulls that will sire progeny to hit a high-quality beef market, bulls to sire feeder calves or bulls to sire replacement heifers? There is no wrong answer, but defining your herd identity will simplify the selection process, help you reach your herd goals and solidify

your position in the industry as a producer of ___ (you fill in the blank) ___.

Customer-based decision

EPDs provide a prediction for how progeny of an animal will perform in traits of economic importance. Which traits are economically important really depends on your customer base. Having a clear focus of what you want to sell helps you define how you prioritize those EPDs.

The three programs featured in Troy Smith's article "Common Goals," which begins on page 236, have defined their breeding programs to address the needs of their customers. Each is a little different from the other — as they need be — to ensure their customers' success.

As we feature those honored by Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) for their commitment to the brand, we see example after example of supplier-customer relationships built on trust in the supplier's

ability to provide the product needed to secure a premium.

Those stories document commercial cattlemen building long-term relationships with a seedstock supplier who is committed to honing in on the carcass and growth traits that will help them raise calves that bring a premium through the system. As that relationship is solidified over time, the premiums come back in terms of a perennial buyer willing to pay more for a known product. We've been honing that system for 35 years, and it works.

The cycle continues

While there's some discussion as to how fast and how quickly herd rebuilding will take place, most in the industry seem to agree it is starting. That means demand for heifers, and demand for heifers creates demand for calving-ease sires.

For those programs focused on raising replacement heifers, now is your time to announce it to the world. Let's start talking cow lines. Let's start talking fertility, stayability, structural soundness, temperament, mothering ability, problem-free genetics. Let's build that MaternalPlus® database to add credibility — and maybe even more EPDs.

Define your destination. Taking an adventurer's approach to building a seedstock herd, rather than mapping your way to a clear destination, may get you lost among the crowd in today's cattle business.

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