



Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

Start the conversation

October. It's one of my favorite times of year. If you've read my column long, you know football is definitely part of the reason, but there are plenty of Angus reasons, too. Production of the magazine will slow up a bit, and I get to get out of the office and onto some ranches. What a beautiful time of year to travel. The spring calves are weaned, the fall calves are coming on and its time to start planning matings for next fall's calf crop.

Where do you start?

When planning those matings, where do you begin?

Of course, I hope part of your answer involves the *Angus Journal* — looking at the ads to see what your fellow breeders are offering for sale, investigating their herd philosophies, and reading about current industry trends and needs.

I'd guess you might use the Sire Search on the American Angus Association website (<https://www.angusonline.org/Nce/SireSummarySearchCriteria.aspx>) to plug in some searches to find out what bulls are out there to meet your needs. I'm enough of a numbers nerd that I could spend days plugging in minimum and maximum expected progeny differences for a variety of traits to see what bulls survive my sorts.

Attending sales to see what's popular and

to rub elbows with fellow cattlemen and get their perspective is important. What better way is there to find out what worked and what didn't work for other breeders? That can be extremely valuable when it comes to knowing whether a popular bull on a national scale will work in your area. If you ranch at altitude or ask cattle to perform on fescue or in high humidity, that can be critical.

Honing your direction

While those are great pieces of the puzzle, your first step should be either to pick up the phone or, better yet, hop in the pickup to visit your customers. That conversation offers you so many opportunities to help frame your breeding program.

For starters, nothing builds loyalty faster than knowing that the person or company to

whom you are giving your hard-earned dollars cares that you have a good product experience. It's important that you understand how the animals you sold to your customers worked in the past. True, some of those who have a problem will bring that to you and ask you to fix it, but not all.

You need to know the answers to those degree questions: Was the bull hard to work with? Did they have any calving trouble? Could they stand a larger calf at birth? Did the calves grow well? When does your customer sell his or her calves? What did they sell for? What would have increased their paycheck? Can you help increase their paycheck with your genetics or with a customer service option?

Taking that first step will ensure that as you read your *Angus Journal*, conduct your sire search and visit with fellow breeders, you'll keep your customers and not your pride as the cornerstone of your breeding program.

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▶ **Mississippi Angus Ass'n Meeting & Banquet, May 5, Raymond**



▶ **Correction to come for the September Next Generation**