



Satisfaction Guaranteed

A prior career in the steak business helps Ohio couple serve bull customers.

Story by *Lyndee Patterson*

Almost everyone can enjoy a great steak, relishing the flavor of a juicy, rich, tender piece of beef. But for Bill and Beverly Roe, it goes much deeper.

Nearly 20 years ago the Hamilton, Ohio, couple made their living in the restaurant business with a chain called Pedro's Angus Steakhouse. By offering *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand steaks, they aimed to give customers a consistently great experience that would bring them back time and again.

Then the Roes moved from one end of the beef industry to the other. When Bev's dad retired, they took over his Angus cow-calf operation.

"The cattle were all registered and high quality, so we decided to start selling breeding animals," she says. "Then we realized there was a high demand for Angus bulls." They developed the business now called Pedro's Angus to focus on seedstock production.

Similar goals

Even though they moved from plate to pasture, the Roes found they still employ

the same basic goals as they did for their restaurant. The work to build a base of repeat customers began with the same attention to quality and customer satisfaction.

"There aren't enough cattlemen here for us to sell to a different breeder every year," Bev says. "We have to make our customers happy and keep them coming back, or we won't have a business."

Quality and performance are among the first draws for new and returning customers. That's why Pedro's Angus sent some of their first bulls to the Ohio Bull Test.

"We needed to know how we compared to everybody else," Bev says.

Less than satisfied with the results, Bill says, "They were just average bulls. I won't settle for average; I want to have the best of the best."

Still, it was helpful to have that benchmark, and the Roes have continuously improved genetics ever since, requiring bulls to exceed target specifications. Breeding soundness exams focus on structural and reproductive quality as well as scrotal circumference.

► Their experience in the restaurant business has given Bill and Bev Roe a different perspective on customer satisfaction than most other seedstock producers.

Statistically, the minimum scrotal circumferences for yearling and mature bulls to pass a breeding soundness exam are 30 and 34 centimeters (cm), respectively, but the Roes require all of their bulls to measure at least 40 cm.

Instead of using the general pass/fail basis, the bulls must achieve defined percentages for morphology and motility. Expected progeny differences (EPDs) for calving ease, milk and many other traits round out the selection process.

All these tests and screenings help Pedro's Angus bulls maintain high quality; however, the Roes keep moving ahead with new technology. They recently conducted a DNA study with Pfizer. "Our goal is to get DNA information for every animal within the herd," Bill says.

"I also want our farm to have high health standards," he continues, noting a 10-year history of testing for tuberculosis (TB).

Educating customers

The myriad of tests and results could be confusing to a buyer, but the Roes work to keep customers from becoming overwhelmed.

"We go through the EPDs and other tests line by line," Bill says. "Then we break them down into pieces that relate directly to them and explain it in ways they can understand."

Breeding for bulls that excel in all these areas ensures that Pedro's Angus cattle are more than one-hit wonders.

"In my opinion, to have a bull that has only one exceptional trait is a waste," Bill says. "If he doesn't have all the qualities we're testing for, then he can't contribute to everything on your farm."

The Roes want that contribution to begin the day the bulls are delivered. They suggest turning them out with cows immediately because their previous ration and nutritional status will allow the bulls to make the transition to a forage-based diet without hurting their fertility.

The bulls have not been on a high-grain diet, nor are they clipped to enhance their appearance.

"I know our bulls will look the same whether they're on our farm or someone else's," Bill says.

"They're not going to fall apart," Bev adds. "If any did, we would give the customer's money back, but we've never had to do that."

Selection for functionality and quality has meant these cattle are never seen at livestock shows and competitions. The only measure the Roes care about is customer satisfaction.



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"We don't select for showing," Bill says. "Things like long hair are a detriment to fertility in the summertime when you're breeding."

"And we don't want 120-pound (lb.) calves that you'd have to pull, but those two things are big in the show business," Bev adds. "We select against those things."

Although the Roes employ different strategies to create the kind of bulls in high demand, selling them is not the primary goal. Instead, the ultimate goal is to help customers improve both their herds and their profitability.

That process can only begin if the customer is satisfied with the entire operation at Pedro's Angus, so it doesn't begin or end with the bulls that are for sale.

"If you don't like our cows, you won't like our bulls," Bill says. "The problem is if you see a bull you like, you'll talk yourself into it."

So, when a new customer approaches, the Ohio couple's first priority is to take them out to see the females and their calves. Only when they believe their operation and bulls can be a good match for a customer will they start working to help develop or improve a new customer's herd.

Of course, excellent bulls help make it work, but it takes more. "We try to emphasize other key aspects by asking questions like, 'Why are you trying to get a good calf out of a bad cow?'" Bill says.

That leads to helping customers identify their bottom-producing cows and establish culling practices.

"If you want to upgrade your cow herd, don't look at quantity," Bev says. "Focus on quality and getting it done right."

From Day 1, Bill keeps detailed records on both individual animals and customers. That allows targeted selection of a bull that will work best for each buyer. The routine free bull delivery is "just another way for us to get to know our customers and their operations," Bill says.

A feeding partner

The drive to help characterize customer cow herds and add value led to a search for a feeding partner. Three years ago they made an arrangement with CAB-licensed partner Silver Creek Feeders of Treynor, Iowa, to feed several loads of their customers' cattle.

"We wanted them to be able to see the quality of their cattle and use the information they receive to discover more marketing opportunities," Bev says.

Silver Creek owner-manager Roger Chambers met with the Roes and their participating customers to explain the process. After the cattle arrived at the yard, some started getting sick. That is common enough, but Chambers was impressed by the way the Roes addressed the problem.

"They put together a questionnaire for their customers to determine how each of them handled vaccines and booster dates, and they were able to isolate the problems," Chambers says.

That underscored the importance of a proper health program, and how it can help a calf reach peak performance. Cattle with Pedro's Angus genetics had an advantage over some other cattle at Silver Creek.

"Their disposition was fantastic; they are the kind of cattle we really like working with," Chambers says. "And it makes a big difference on how well they gain, how we can handle them and their overall performance at the feedlot."

"We were selecting for disposition long before we realized it correlated to the carcass," Bev notes.

"I've never had a buyer ask for a wild and crazy bull," Bill puts in. "We just don't sell those."

Improved marketing doesn't apply just to calves. The Roes help customers resell their bulls, too, offering advice on how to represent an animal to get the best price. Or if a buyer seems interested in a bull that is a few years old, they will point the way to some of their customers while providing information on registration and performance.

Dedication to customers shows in both their warranty and satisfaction guarantee. The former means if a bull gets injured during breeding time, the Roes promptly bring a replacement for the rest of the season. As for the latter, "If you're not happy with the calves from our bulls, we'll give you your money back. Period," Bill says.

Customers are king, but the couple also finds time to help in maintaining a positive image for the cattle industry. In the past they've put on seminars, encouraged local college students to take pictures on their farm, and even interviewed with reporters to help set the record straight when animal rights activists muddy the water.

Their experience in the restaurant business has given the Roes a different perspective on customer satisfaction than most other seedstock producers. They are a prime example of, "what goes around comes around." By placing customers and the industry first while raising high-quality Angus bulls, their business has thrived.

"Our philosophy on the farm is that we only have two things to sell," Bill says. "We have good animals and integrity."

That's all any customer could ask for.

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Editor's Note: Lyndee Patterson is industry information intern for Certified Angus Beef LLC.



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