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Midwest Beef Cattle Consultants - W. Mark Hilton, DVM

Vol 18 Issue 1 Winter 2020

Expense or Investment; Bargain or Value

When I was a young boy growing up, our livestock were very important to our family farm business. When it was time to buy a new bull or boar, my dad would examine our herd to see where we were strong and where we needed to improve. We were repeat customers with the seedstock producers we frequented because we had success with their genetics; we trusted them and they took care of us if something went wrong. There were times that our top choice was not in our budget. As a youngster, that was hard for me to understand. Why couldn't we always take the best one home? Dad explained that although we had to write a check for that new bull making him an expense, he was actually an investment. He was expected to make us money. We never bought the lowest price animals from the "bargain pen" because that animal would not move our herd forward. He was cheap, but he had no value to us.

How do you balance all of these factors? If you think you need a bargain bull just to get your cows pregnant, I am hoping that after you read our newsletter, you may change your mind. A bull should not be seen as an expense as the bull is half (or more if you keep heifers) of your herd. A bad bull will haunt you for years. If you own 50 bred cows and those cows are worth \$1500 each, that is a \$75,000 investment. That is a huge investment and those cows deserve a bull that will make them better.

What makes a bull a great investment and a real value? That is a list that you need to make. Here is mine. Let's see if my list of what makes my cattle an investment is similar to your list?

- Not having to get up at 2 AM to check heifers during calving season. We expect very little calving difficulty in our heifers and virtually none in our cows.

Our MBCC sired calves are consistent and have great vigor at birth. Heifers become moderate cows with excellent dispositions. Your cattle should work for you, not the other way around! That's exactly what you get from MBCC bulls.

Schuyler Boyden,
Illinois



MBCC Balancer, Angus and SimAngus bulls

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- Walking out to the pasture and seeing a newborn nursing vigorously while his just-calved dam is licking him off
- Cows that keep their flesh without large amounts of supplemental feed
- Females that are highly fertile and calve on schedule every year
- Calves that wean off heavy and sell for top dollar
- Cows that are so calm that you just enjoy walking out in the pasture being around them
- Having cows 15 years of age with great feet and udders while calving every year right on schedule
- Feedlot gain, health and carcass traits that make our calves moneymakers for whoever feeds them
- To have our bull buyers say that the bulls they bought from MBCC are among the best they have ever owned (my #1 goal)



MBCC Balancer cow-calf pair

You will not have to purchase the most expensive bull in our sale to get all of the above. Every bull we offer for sale has met these lofty criteria. My final thought on every bull is, “would I want my parents to buy this bull?” If not, he becomes a steer.

New for 2020

DNA tests have been available for about 10 years now and the improvements in the past 2-3 years have been impressive. When a bull has “genomically-enhanced” EPDs (GE-EPDs), that means that the bull has been DNA tested and now instead of his EPDs only being a prediction of what he is going to produce based on his pedigree and performance, it is also based on his genes that control these traits. For example, if you are buying a bull for use on heifers, you want as much assurance as possible that he will be a calving ease bull. A yearling bull has sired zero calves so far when you purchase him. Purchasing a bull with GE-EPDs is like buying a bull that has already sired 15 calves. Which gives you more assurance, buying a bull with 0 progeny or one with 15? An easy choice, right? After we received our results, I castrated 3 of our bulls because they fell short of our goals. Other bulls showed they were even better than first thought. The bottom line is you have much greater assurance of the genetics you are buying from MBCC to move your herd forward.

Bull Information on Website

The sale bull genetics, EPDs and performance data are at **www.mwbeefcattle.com**. Click on “for sale” and print off the data sheets. These will be updated as we take additional weights. Bulls will be weighed off test on Feb 10 and we should have all the data on the website by Feb 13. Put a note on your phone or circle the date on your calendar; then call me with any questions you have. Your goal should be to narrow your list of bulls to about 6 bulls for every bull you need.

Why should you call before buying? We know these bulls very well. We will always tell you the positives and the negatives of the bulls. If you have bull “1G” on your list and that bull does not really fit your goals, I will tell you that. If on the other hand, he is not on your list and he needs to be, I’ll suggest you take a closer look at him. You need to get the bull that best meets your goals. It’s a big deal!

Cow Size and Weaning Weight

Over the past 30 years, mature cow size has increased about 300#. What has this done to calf weaning weight? Not as much as you would expect.

For every 100# increase in cow weight, weaning weights only increase by ~15#. It takes 50# of feed to make 42# of milk which makes 1# of calf gain. Almost none of the herds I work with need to have bigger cows that give more milk. It just does not make economic sense. All of us have a limited amount of grass during the grazing season and cows can only consume so much forage. No wonder weaning weights have risen very little.

What is the additional cost of a herd of cows that weighs 100# more than another? Studies show the cost is about \$45 more/cow/year. If 15# of weaning weight costs \$45, that is not a good investment.

Goal - moderate sized cows with moderate milk. We have the genetics that will make these profitable cows for you!

Breeding Soundness Examinations

All sale bulls will sell with a certificate that shows they passed a breeding soundness examination (BSE). Having a BSE done by a qualified DVM should be an absolute before you buy a bull. If you are looking at a bull at another farm and he is not tested before you get him, turn and walk away. To pass a BSE, a bull has to be deemed acceptable in: feet and leg structure, scrotal circumference, all reproductive structures, semen motility (movement) and semen morphology (shape).

If you have mature bulls that you will be using this spring, they will need a BSE before you turn them out. Every bull needs a BSE completed before every breeding season. Doing a BSE is the most cost-effective procedure your herd health veterinarian can do for you. About 10% of all bulls fail their BSE's. If you turn out a bull that is infertile you can get very few or no cows bred. I have been a DVM for 36 years and every year I have seen a case where an infertile bull was not tested and caused a disaster for the herd owner.

Make your appointment to do BSE's on your herd bulls before our March 14 bull sale. That way if you need a bull you will have the opportunity to select from our very best.

Breed Complementarity

I have been asked many times why Gelbvieh genetics play a prominent role in the bulls we produce. I learned about the breed when I was a Purdue Animal Science student. The Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) in Nebraska is THE premier genetics research ranch in the US and when they looked at the 20 most common beef breeds, Gelbvieh came out on top with pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed. This is a very economically relevant trait that measures both growth (pounds of calf at weaning) and fertility (a high percentage of cows exposed to the bulls got pregnant). This got my attention.

When I moved to Iowa to start my first job as a DVM, I found that nearly all of our best beef clients used Gelbvieh in their breeding programs. All used Angus, many used Simmental in addition to Gelbvieh. I asked these top producers, "Why Gelbvieh?" Their answers included: "They make the best cows. Very calm, wean off a huge calf and breed back right on schedule year after year." "Oh, we love their disposition. They are just as tame as my old Herefords." "My Gelbvieh cross cows last longer than any of the other breeds. They haven't even hit their peak at 10 years of age".

A recent MARC study compared 18 different breeds based on many traits. When I examined the traits that matter most—birth, weaning and yearling weight; marbling; ribeye; backfat—Gelbvieh ranked above average in every trait. In fact, Gelbvieh were #4 for low birth weight while being 4th best for yearling weight! Simmental also ranked above average in every economical trait. Angus ranked above average in all except ribeye area (9/18) and backfat (18/18). Angus are a wonderful breed, but they need to be combined with a more muscular and leaner breed like Gelbvieh or Simmental. Twenty years of carcass data shows that the most profitable carcass is a British (Angus) - Continental (Gelbvieh or Simmental) cross. Gelbvieh and Simmental used to have a negative reputation for marbling. Not anymore. Both breeds have made tremendous strides in adding marbling. Same with calving issues. We just don't see calving problems when using Gelbvieh and Simmental genetics on Angus and Angus cross cows. Speaking of cows, crossbred cows remain productive for 1.5 years more than a straightbred. That's one reason why a crossbred cow generates an additional \$150/year to your bottom line compared to a straightbred cow.

Bull Videos

We will have videos of all the bulls posted on our YouTube channel by March 1. A link to the videos will be posted on our website www.mwbeefcattle.com. Don't expect to see fat bulls that look like feedlot steers. These bulls are athletes ready to go to work for you!

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Midwest Beef Cattle Consultants — Superior Genetics for Profit-minded Beef Producers

Saturday, March 14, 2020 Open House and Sale Information

We have 28 Balancer (1 red; 1, 2 year-old; 1, 18 months of age), 4 calving-ease Angus (3 are 18-20 months old), 1 red SimHereford and 3 SimAngus bulls. This is our 17th year selling bulls and this is the most consistent group of bulls we have ever offered. Many are 5, 6 or 7 generations of top AI sires. Combine that with the GE-EPDs and you will have a hard time finding this quality offered elsewhere. If you have never been to our sale, please refer to your Fall 2019 newsletter to learn our unique way that you can buy our bulls. We feel it is the most fair sale in the nation. No one else lets you see how much competition you have on your bull selections.

One improvement that we have made in the sale is you are asked to give us your top 3 choices (if you choose to do so) by 12:15 pm so I have more time to make the sale order. Sharing your top 3 with us gives you the best chance to get one of your top bulls purchased. All 6 bull owners (Tom Brooks, Chris Muegge, DJ Weimer, Shawn and Heather Wirth, BJ Riedie and myself) will have clipboards to take your information. I will then take the information and the bulls with the most “top choice” ratings will start the sale. The sale order will be projected on the screen before the start of the sale so you know when your bulls will be offered. Be sure to get to the sale early to get all of your questions answered before the sale!

We will again have bred cows, bred heifers, cow-calf pairs (pairs with very young calves will not be at sale—we will have videos) and open heifers for sale. Females will sell after the bulls. All data will be on the website by Feb 13 and just like the bulls, call us so you get the animals that fit your herd goals.

******* To receive a sale catalog, please contact Mark at 765-714-1092 *******

Directions to Muegge farm—3824 S Binford Rd, Carthage, IN 46115

From intersection of SR 9 and Hwy 40, Greenfield: Go south on SR 9 for 3 miles to 300 S. Turn left and go 5.1 miles to Binford Rd (angles SE). (At 600E you jog south for about 10 feet. Immediately jog back east to stay on 300S. GPS may mess you up here!) Angle right on Binford and go 1.3 miles to farm on left. It is just past the stop sign. Look for “MBCC Bull Sale” signs.