



## Around THE WORLD

by Kiley McKinna

I hope all is well with you. Hopefully by now many of you are wrapping up spring calving and are relieved the daily winter chores are behind you. Annual spring bull sales are well underway and early indications of a successful sale season are very good. Despite an extremely hard winter in a large portion of the country, farmers and ranchers are turning out to annual sales in large numbers and interest across the board is up.

Through my dozen or so spring sales thus far it has never been clearer that the good ol' commercial cowboy hasn't lost his touch evaluating true market value. And there's no question a combination of product quality, data and service is what 99.9% of commercial cattlemen demand from their seedstock supplier.

Now the million dollar question. If you're providing the customer with a high-level product, backed with accurate data and reputable customer service, where do the premiums lie? Using strictly the eyeball test in my travels, it has been obvious there has been a premium on low to moderate birth weight (under 90 lbs.) bulls that still have an abundance of performance. That's not to say a bull with a higher birth weight can't bring a premium, but if that's going to happen he'd better have a polled head and *well-above* average growth.

With that said, and birth weight clearly being the top priority for most commercial cattlemen this spring, there has been other areas of premiums as well. Namely polled heads, docility, performance, and there has definitely been an increased demand for carcass merit and ultrasound data.

If you can manage to wrap it all in one package, the wild card is marketing and sale-day presentation.

By now you may have leafed through this "Herd Sire Issue" and your mind is considering herd sire and/or AI sire selection. If so, I would encourage you to keep these "areas of premiums" in mind when making spring breeding decisions, which as we know, will impact your program's bottom line two years from now.

Another thing to keep in mind when making these critical breeding decisions is the across breed EPD comparison that was presented at the NALF annual meeting in Denver, Colorado, back in January. This was a snapshot of our rank within the industry, which clearly defined our strengths and pointed to areas needing improvement. If your unfamiliar with this chart, feel free to contact any member of the NALF team at the home office in Colorado.

I hope you enjoy the Annual Herd Sire Issue and I wish you the best of luck with you're remaining sales, spring calving and AI sire selection.

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