

# 7 Steps To Building Better Bull Sales

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**W**ith the spring bull-sale season just around the corner, here are some recommendations for getting your bulls and their performance records in top shape.

## Get your bulls in good physical condition.

Present them in body condition score (BCS) 5, 6 or 7. Bulls that are thin at sale time do not present themselves well. Buyers will see them as hard-doing or unthrifty. Do not put yourself in a position to have to explain to buyers why your bulls are too thin. They will discount bulls that are not in proper condition.

## Conduct breeding-soundness exams.

You should sell bulls that are 14 months or older with breeding-soundness exams by veterinarians. Buyers can consider bulls that pass such exams to be fertile and able to settle cows. There are minimum scrotal circumferences that allow bulls to pass breeding-soundness exams at various ages; however, you should not settle for the minimums. Rather, select bulls that are above average for their ages. Sellers also should guarantee bulls sold younger than 14 months to pass breeding-soundness exams when they reach 14 months of age. That gives peace of mind to buyers. Any guarantees with respect to the ability to freeze semen are separate agreements with your buyers.

## Ensure weaning weights are on file.

The North American Limousin Foundation (NALF) uses weaning data to compute adjusted measurements and expected progeny differences (EPDs) for many traits. In addition, weaning contemporary groups form the basis for genetic evaluation of several traits—such as scrotal circumference, docility and all carcass traits—and of yearling contemporary groups. Remember, it takes at least two bulls to form a contemporary group.

## Ultrasound-scan your bulls.

Scan all of them, not just those in the sale. Scanning only your better bulls actually

makes them look worse, not better. Make sure they are between 300 and 450 days of age. NALF cannot compute adjusted measurements for under- or over-age bulls or bulls without weaning data. See NALF's Guide to Ultrasound (in the "Genetic Evaluation" section of the Web site) for more information about scanning.

## Record and submit yearling data.

You must take yearling weights at least 140 days after weaning, when animals are between 330 and 450 days of age. You may use ultrasound-scan weights as yearling weights, but you must let NALF know if you wish to do so. NALF does not automatically process scan weights as yearling weights. When gathering yearling weights don't forget to obtain hip heights, pelvic measurements and scrotal circumferences.

## Consider DNA testing for black and polled.

In a Colorado State University (CSU) analysis of Limousin auctions and private-treaty sales in 2004 and 2005, bulls tested as homozygous black brought, on average, \$512 more than untested, double-black bulls. Homozygous-polled bulls reaped even more of an advantage, selling for \$1,331 more than their untested, double-polled counterparts did. Both MMI Genomics and Igenity provide black and polled testing.

## Consider DNA testing for genetic defects for Lim-Flex® and percentage bulls.

Tests are available from both MMI Genomics and Igenity for arthrogryposis multiplex (AM) and neuropathic hydrocephalus (NH), which you might find in Angus purebreds and hybrids, and for osteopetrosis (OS), which you might find in Red Angus purebreds and hybrids. For more information about genetic defects in beef cattle, see the April 2009 "NALF Line" column. **LW**