



The VIEW FROM HERE

Kyle Haley

Often times, I read so many articles and research papers I end up confusing myself, in affect, making the business of raising and marketing cattle much more difficult than it really needs to be. I think at times we are all guilty of focusing on the latest ink-grabbing headline while forgetting, or at least neglecting, to keep an eye on the basics.

This past spring, Certified Angus Beef partnered with *Drovers* to survey U.S. commercial cattle producers with 200 or more beef cows. They got back 1,035 completed forms from producers in 45 states.

While I didn't find the results the least bit shocking, they did remind me that the basics of beef cattle production still rule the roost.

As producers of Limousin seedstock, the following responses should be of interest.

- 89% of respondents keep replacement heifers
- 73% of the cows are either straightbred Angus or Angus-based crossbreds
- Calving-ease was nearly three times as important as any other trait
- Growth was the second most important trait
- Maternal was the third most important trait

I never have and never will use this column to tell you what kind of cattle you should be raising. After all, you know your program and your customers a heckuva lot better than I do. However, IF I were trying to convince prospective bull customers to use Limousin, the information provided above would definitely be used in my sales pitch.

That said, selling bulls to a first-time buyer is one thing, having that person become a repeat customers is another matter. In other words, you can promise them the moon, but if your cattle don't ultimately deliver, they will move on to another seedstock supplier.

Think back to the bulls you have sold recently. How many of the first ones that left the pen combined calving-ease, growth and maternal? My gut tells me that if I had a pen of balanced-trait bulls with some eye appeal, a little bit of conversation about hybrid vigor and breed complementarity would result a decent number of sales.

Don't get me wrong, things like breeder reputation, docility, carcass traits, ultrasound and performance info, etc. also weigh into the equation at some point during the selection process, but most astute commercial cattlemen will continue to require the bulls they select cover the basics of calving-ease, growth and maternal first and foremost. They are simply too important to overlook. If you don't believe me, ask your customer.

LW