

Things to Consider for Bull Season

The spring bull-sale season is just around the corner, here are some tips for getting your bulls and their performance records in top shape.

Follow-up with previous buyers. It is very important to follow-up with your customers to see how the bulls are working for them. Did they survive the breeding season and what shape are they in? Remind them about the benefits they will see in the spring as their calf crop hits the ground.

It is also a good time to let them know about the many benefits of purchasing Limousin-influenced cattle and the outlets you and the North American Limousin Foundation (NALF) can provide them. Whether it is assisting them in marketing their calves, keeping them up-to-date with the happenings in the beef industry or reminding them of our commitment to them (your customers), we can provide services unique to the beef industry. Contact NALF and have us send them a *Bottom Line*.

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. You 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.

Ensure weaning weights are on file. 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 a minimum of two bulls to form a contemporary group.

Ultrasound-scan your bulls. Scan all of them, not just those for 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 website) for more information about scanning.

Record and submit additional yearling data, such as weights, hip heights, pelvic measurements and scrotal circumferences. Take yearling weights at least 140 days after weaning, when animals are between 330 and 450 days of age. You may use qualified ultrasound-scan weights as yearling weights, but you must let NALF know if you wish to do so as NALF does not automatically process scan weights as yearling weights. As you submit new weights, EPDs will be updated to reflect the animal's performance within its contemporary group.

Consider DNA testing for black and polled. It pays to test! 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. 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. Contractural arachnodactyly (CA) or Fawn calf information and testing is available through Pfizer and Igenity.

Always remember when recording animals, that you should submit full contemporary groups to provide the most accurate records. Submitting only your top-end progeny gives a very biased picture of your cattle. Whole herd reporting adjusts the average accordingly making your top bulls standout, where as reporting only your top-end bulls will adjust half of them to below average, hurting their EPDs. **LW**