

Fundamentals: They're Not Just for the 'Old School'

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My dad was a high school football coach. He was what we now would call “old school.” He believed fundamentals built winning teams. The most sophisticated offense or defense could not overcome poor blocking or tackling. It seems simple enough, but he spent hours in practice drilling his players until those seemingly basic skills became natural and the execution was in such a way that the job was accomplished in the most efficient manner.

The seedstock business is similar. Certain fundamentals are necessary to experience success. Producers who are experiencing success have common traits. They produce a good product (one that is documented as such), have sound marketing programs and build lasting relationships with customers. If any of those things are not in place, the probability of success lessens or is nonexistent.

Documentation begins with the registration paper. The pricing study the North American Limousin Foundation (NALF) conducted with Colorado State University (CSU) showed profoundly that commercial producers are willing to pay more for properly registered animals.

Additionally, breeders should want their customers to have that information to assist in making future

genetic selections. In many added-value programs, some type of parental verification is a prerequisite. If a properly transferred registration is not furnished, the offspring's marketability is limited. Helping your customers' cattle qualify for marketing programs is a small investment in building good customer relations.

Proper management and record keeping are other fundamentals where successful breeders excel. Would you buy an animal that did not have expected progeny differences (EPDs)? Do you buy animals without ultrasound-scan data? Gone are the days when visual appraisal is the only tool used when purchasing seedstock. Do not expect customers to purchase cattle that do not have EPDs. If they do, do not expect them to pay a premium for them.

Marketing can be as simple as picking up the telephone. It might include a Web site that allows a worldwide audience to read about your program. Print advertising keeps your name in front of a wide array of potential customers. In any case, a consistent presence is a key fundamental to a program's success. Some people feel their enterprises are the center of the universe so they sit and wait for people to “discover” them. Marketing

is not a “sometime” thing. Successful seedstock producers do some form of marketing 365 days of the year, not just the month before their sale.

Let's get back to the “old school” and begin by registering calves. Registered calves are worth more. Registration verifies seedstock with reliable pedigree, performance and EPD information. Registration enables comprehensive breed marketing, progressive research and a variety of member services. Registrations are the lifeblood of breed success.

Let's get back to the “old school” by transferring registration papers. Transfers authenticate pedigree, performance and EPD information. Transfers provide official ownership history from breeder to buyer. Transfers demonstrate breeder commitment to superior seedstock and service after the sale. Transfers provide selection, management and breed-promotion information to the buyer. Transfers indicate a promise of long-term customer satisfaction.

Paying attention to the fundamentals is the beginning of being successful in everything we do. My dad is a proud member of the state football coaches' hall of fame. Paying attention to the fundamentals proved to be successful for him, and it can be for you, too. **LW**