

Dalebanks Digest

Fall 2014

“Surprise!” by Matt Perrier

When was the last time you were “pleasantly surprised?”

Outside of the occasional mid-summer rain when the weather forecaster predicted sunny skies, surprises are rarely welcomed on most farms and ranches. From cattle getting out during family dinner to the neighbor’s one-testicled white “steer” getting in with your open heifers, surprises are usually *far* from pleasant.

For 110 years, our family has strived to mate and manage cattle that minimize genetic “surprises” for our customers. Granted, the nature of population genetics and Dr. Mendel’s *Law of Segregation* dictate a certain amount of variation in cattle phenotypes. But it is our goal to not only produce consistent bulls, but use the most proven tools available to quantify their genetics before they produce progeny in your cowherd.

Reproductive losses, calving difficulty, poor feedlot performance and low-grading carcasses hurt the cowman’s bottom line. It is not our goal to promise extreme performance in any set of traits, but we endeavor to satisfy our customers with sound, docile bulls that maintain condition, get females bred, produce unassisted births, and sire rapid early growth & excellent grid performance. We also expect these bulls’ daughters to be moderate-framed, sound-uddered females who stay in the herd for many years.

The genetic tools today give us the opportunity to effectively produce genetics that can meet thresholds for many recorded traits. Many of the bulls selling November 22 have been tested through the Zoetis 50K genomic profile, and this information is included in their EPDs. In addition, many of the bulls’ dams have been genomic-tested as well. As in the past, all bulls have been weighed and measured for all EPD traits processed by the American Angus Association. These tools, coupled with the no-nonsense selection methods that we use in the management and selection of our cowherd, result in consistent, honest bulls that should meet or exceed expected results in many traits of economic importance.

The 130 bulls in this year’s sale represent the top half of the male calves born in the Dalebanks program in 2013. All of them are still grazing native tallgrass pasture, hopefully adding to their breeding soundness and longevity.

We look forward to your evaluation of these rugged, hard-working bulls on November 22nd.



“Surprise!” by Eric Burden, Dalebanks Angus Cowman

Tracing Our Roots

by Matt Perrier

Our family has always followed strict protocols for recording and maintaining ancestral records, performance data and management information on our cowherd. Ironically, we have not been as dedicated in maintaining our own family’s ancestral and historical information.

Fortunately, Tom and Carolyn have recently worked with family members and friends to stitch together connections between the current Perrier family and our ancestors in England and Scotland. After all these years, Tom and Carolyn ventured to the United Kingdom in late August and traced their family roots to the Graham family (Carolyn’s father’s family) in Scotland and the Loy family (Tom’s mother’s mother’s family) in England.

During this fact-finding trip, they were able to snap a photo in front of the Dalebanks home place. As we have said for years, there never was an individual in our family named “Dale Banks,” but it was humorous to actually see an entrance gate to the original Dalebanks farm in England that does little to dispel the confusion.

We were pleased that Mom and Dad took the opportunity to trace our family’s roots and view firsthand the similarities between our area and this region in England.



Ag Questions: Are You Receptive?

Reprinted with permission- David Cooper, Progressive Cattleman

Imagine a situation where you're working your cattle in the field, pasture or feedlot, and suddenly you find a spectator – standing on a public road – watching you do your work. Perhaps he even has a camera in his hand. Here comes the hard part. How would you react? Would you ask him what he's doing there? Engage him in a discussion? Invite him to get a closer look? Point out the fact you have a gun rack in your truck?

Odds are if you haven't had this experience, you will one day, and it's worth preparing yourself and your crew with a proper way to respond. That hypothetical situation was just one of the points raised at the International Cattle Welfare Symposium held in July at Iowa State University. The point made repeatedly: Don't be offended or defensive when the public wants to know how you do your job.

Those who raise livestock and produce food are a small segment of society, but their impact on society's health and survival is enormous. So it's only natural those who eat the food produced by others will want to know how the work is done. It's a realistic expectation because this is their food we're talking about. And it's natural for people to be concerned about what they put into their mouths. If they aren't comfortable with it – they don't buy it.

Studies also show that consumers are growing more distrustful in the information explaining how they get their food. It doesn't matter what's said on the label, the menu or The New York Times. But when they see and learn for themselves, they believe it.

Given that background, it's critical today's producers understand their consumers and be willing to answer questions, understand concerns and listen to their solutions. Read that sentence again. This is especially noteworthy on issues of animal welfare, a topic creating many questions from those far removed from the farm.

Expect some of those questions to be uncomfortable or dicey. Consumers will ask about the treatment of animals and procedures such as castration, dehorning, branding and euthanasia.

As long as producers answer in a forthright way, explaining their methods, challenges and motivation, in most instances it will result in understanding. Consumers know agriculture requires a committed lifestyle, an intense knowledge of the land, climate and economy.

Armed with the information they seek, today's consumers can build greater appreciation for the labor and resources you need to succeed. But just as important is for farmers and ranchers to be receptive to consumers' curiosity and their concerns about the product. If we treat their questions with hostility, it's hostility that we're bound to receive in return.

As more than one speaker put it at the Cattle Welfare Symposium, "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Looking Forward

by Matt Perrier

Nearly any conversation between Angus breeders today will eventually turn to decisions that were made last spring by the American Angus Association (AAA) Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer.

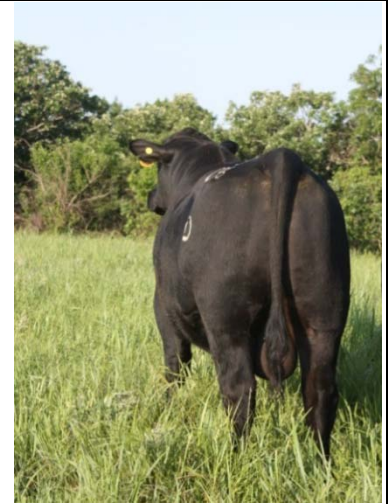
These decisions, and the many that ensued in the months following, will have lasting effects on AAA business in the future. While there is not ample space to outline our family's thoughts on the matter, we will simply state that while we are proud of our past, we are focused on our future.

The future is very bright for beef producers who are willing to use science, technology and creative thinking to produce beef for global consumers growing increasingly hungry for high quality beef. It is our family's hope that we will continue to have easy access to genetic selection tools that improve (both in accuracy and scope) with each group of data submitted into genetic evaluation. This is the service we are accustomed to, and what our customers have come to expect when they purchase Angus genetics.

Over the past three decades, it has been our commercial customers who have first seemed to "get" these selection tools' true value. Without getting carried away by elevating single traits, ratios or EPDs to extreme levels, our cow-calf producers have systematically used these powerful tools to improve their cowherd and calf crops. Thanks to you, our family can view genetic evaluation and the seedstock business in a more logical, no-nonsense manner.

Since the early 1980s, the AAA membership, Directors and staff have created a culture of continued improvement in the genetic evaluation arena. From adjusted weights, ratios, EBVs, EPDs, and Bio-Economic Indexes to genomics, they have constantly reinvented themselves to maintain these tools' (and Angus genetics') relevance. More importantly, the current tools have been continually refined and improved so that the information is accurate and useful for beef cattle selection.

Our family expects this course of constant improvement to be continued. Wherever we must source them, we will continue to seek the most accurate, applicable selection tools available...both for our herd's sake, and that of our customers'.



Annual Bull Sale
Saturday, November 22, 2014

Selling 130 yearling and coming 2-yr-olds

Sale books will be mailed and available at
www.dalebanks.com in late October.

Cattle Breeding: Progress or Change?

By Burke Teichart

Portions reprinted with permission, *BEEF*

Years of observation suggest that the most profitable ranches have cow herds that are at, or just slightly above, average for most economically important traits. The most profitable herds also have lower-than-average milk production. Trying to push a herd beyond average for an environment usually comes with a cost in feed or stocking rate.

There are many genetic antagonisms (unintended consequences) which can vary from almost imperceptible at first to fairly significant. We can make rapid genetic change, but it doesn't always yield economic progress. Looking at the dairy industry as an example, we see that, if you select primarily for milk, you will get lots of milk. You will also get significant inbreeding as a result of extensive use of artificial insemination (AI) to closely related sires, poor fertility, poor survivability, many health issues and lots of cost. To a lesser extent, I think that focused selection in beef cattle for high growth and carcass grade has yielded some of the same effects.

Please understand that EPDs and genomically enhanced EPDs work, but too many people have used EPDs as a tool to strive for "maximums." Maximum is seldom, if ever, the most profitable course.

Improvement carries a cost

Most improvement in performance comes with a cost. Often, that cost is in the reduction of performance in another trait, a reduction in stocking rate, or higher feed costs, each of which can take several years to become obvious. We need to be sure the added revenue is greater than the added cost.

The use of AI, embryo transfer and today's genomically enhanced EPDs, without great care, can lead to a significant increase in inbreeding for the most popular breeds.

Being a "systems thinker," considering these observations and recognizing that the use of EPDs can move us toward or away from our profit objectives, I suggest the following combination of management and genetics as a method of herd improvement:

- Cull cows that aren't doing what you want.

Don't expect careful culling to be a big genetic trend changer. It won't be. But, it will keep your herd cleaned up, functional and easy to manage. It will help you avoid keeping offspring from the poorest few. I have noticed that, when culling for unacceptable disposition or performance, you only have to remove a few each year to keep problems at a low level and to make life easier and much more enjoyable.

- Use low-cost development and a very short breeding season for yearling heifers, exposing significantly more than will be needed.

If you start with heifers that can be developed at a low cost and get pregnant in less than 30 days, you will have better cows raising better calves and with better rebreeding rates. Naturally you will sort off the real misfits before breeding.

This is more management than genetics, but it will give much quicker bottom-line results. This is written from the perspective of one who produces his own replacement heifers. If your better alternative is to buy

bred cows, you should try to find a producer who comes close to following these recommendations for your source of bred cows.

You must depend on your seedstock provider(s) to make most of the genetic changes you desire in your herd.

I want my bull provider to:

- Judiciously use the genetic tools at his disposal.
- Produce and help me select bulls that will produce good mother cows.

They should be moderate in size and milk production, and work in my environment and with my management.

- He needs to be a low input operator.

Since I don't pamper my cows, I don't want him to pamper his. Sure, I want good steer calves, but I want mother cows first. A good mother will usually produce an acceptable steer and do it with low cost.

- Keep accurate individual records and report 100% of the records to his breed association.

I don't like the problems or inferior performance to be excluded from the records.

- Not follow popular fads without good justification.
- Be satisfied with slow, sustained, balanced progress.

Many years of watching has shown that, when you try to move one trait too far or too fast, you usually give up something else that is good. Balance is very important.

- Beware of, and be honest about, genetic antagonisms as they manifest themselves.

While I'm sure I've observed many cases of bigger mature size and higher milk being negatively correlated with reproduction, I also see a negative correlation with stocking rate, which is not a genetic correlation. This kind of relationship between a genetic trait and a non-genetic effect needs to be considered.

We have great tools; but, because of genetic and environmental antagonisms, I think we need to be satisfied with slow change in a balanced approach – maintaining or slowly improving genetics for cowherd productivity. Any genetic change that results in more feed cost, a reduction in stocking rate, or a reduction in reproduction should be questioned.

NRCS Fall Field Day October 22

The Greenwood County Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service office will hold a fall field day at Dalebanks Angus on October 22, 2014.

This field day will cover a variety of topics and practices, all implemented at Dalebanks over the past several years. Both experts and producers will be on hand to discuss and answer questions about the following production and conservation practices:

- Balancing native pasture, cool season grasses and no-till cover crops for optimal grazing systems
- Use of Natural Cattle Handling for improved profit
- Watering systems to improve performance and reduce erosion

All are invited to attend this interactive and informative session. Dinner will be provided.

Please RSVP to the NRCS Greenwood County office at 620-583-5544.



Annual Bull Sale

Sat., November 22, 2014 * 12:30 pm

At the ranch, 3 ½ mi NW of Eureka

Selling **130 bulls**

60 coming 2's, 70 fall yearlings

Ultrasounded, fertility tested and ready to work

Sired by: 454, Complete, Contrast, 7229, Right Answer, Bismarck, Mentor, Confidence, Final Answer, Dalebanks Logic and others

This year's bull offering illustrates our family's 110-year commitment to balanced-trait, profitable bulls produced for the commercial cattle producer.

- Their EPD show that they excel in a **complete** range of AHIR-recorded traits.
- Their phenotypes indicate that they are sound-structured, moderate-framed bulls that should perform well in a variety of environments.
- Bulls were developed on a forage-based ration and have spent the majority of their lives grazing native grass in the Flint Hills.

Spring Calving

Dalebanks Females

For Sale Private Treaty

38 Registered Angus Heifers

Top quality females, all 50K genomic tested

Calving Feb-March 2015

15 Registered Angus Cows

Aged 3-8 years, excellent producers

Calving in April 2015

Invest in these balanced-trait, no-nonsense genetics, and put the Dalebanks Difference to work in your operation.

Contact us anytime...

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Dalebanks Angus

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FORWARD & ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED