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### **LOTS OF BULL SALES**

Every year I believe there are more bull sales held in this area surrounding Springfield. One of the longer tenured sales is the Southwest Missouri Beef Cattle Improvement Association's sale now held at the Springfield Livestock Marketing Center. This will be the 99<sup>th</sup> sale held with the cooperation of University of Missouri Extension livestock specialists. We've made numerous changes since 1973 when the first sales were held at Nixa. They next found a home at Melton Ranch, Mt. Vernon. The sales give seedstock producers a chance to promote their program if they only have a few bulls each year to sell. The area from which bulls can come from Vernon county across to Texas county to the Arkansas line. This area has a very dense population of cow-calf raisers so it's logical bull sellers find this an attractive location to bring their bulls to. The one thing I hope for is that they bring some good bulls and not those they haven't been able to sell at home.

Our BCIA sets standards of performance that increases the chances those bulls will make herd improvement. When we started in 1973, frame scoring was just getting emphasis placed on it. Other measurable traits or objective traits the bulls met were weaning weight, yearling weight and scrotal circumference. Specialists would also evaluate them at one year of age for conformation which was a subjective trait.

Today we've tried to place as much emphasis on objective or measurable traits as possible to make herd improvement. Expected progeny difference (EPD) is a good tool to use when making selection picks. Some of the breed associations have 20 or more EPDs to help cattlemen size up the needs within their herd for the various traits. In our sale we stress calving ease, weaning weight, yearling weight, milk, marbling and ribeye size. Breeders will likely have more traits available for you to consider on sale day such as docility, mature cow weight, scrotal circumference, carcass weight, hoof score, etc.

I encourage producers to use percentile rank when looking at the EPDs. That rank (percentile) indicates how a bull compares to other bulls across the breed. A 50% tells you the bull is average for the breed. As the rank goes towards 0%, that means he's above average. Normally, bull shoppers want something above average, but not always. Milk EPD is a good example if you feel your cows are

giving too much milk which affects their reproductive performance in your environment. I encourage you to get your sale catalog for a sale well ahead of the sale date or your visit to a breeder's farm. Look it over for objective data that will help you move forward in making progress. The Springfield, BCIA sale is March 28<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm. There are only 29 bulls to sell, 27 Angus and 2 Herefords, so it will go fast. Extension specialists will have a 30 minute session in the sale ring at 5:30 pm to answer questions about buying bulls by the numbers on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

### **CASTRATION = VALUE ADDED**

The first part of my letter this month focused on bull buying, now let's look at the steer side of beef production. If you calve in the first half of the year you should have several calves on the ground. Have you been castrating the bull calves their first few days? Of course, if you're a purebred breeder and keep bulls for breeding purposes the following doesn't apply to you.

The buzz words, VALUE ADDED, are actually the starting point for receiving a premium for your steers this fall when you sell them. Market price surveys across the country consistently show that the dock on steers vs bulls on sale day will be \$7 to \$10 per hundred or depending on the demand at that time and who's in the seats bidding. That's somewhere in the range of \$50 per head. Yes, I've heard all the claims about the extra weight on an intact bulls will carry but research doesn't show that much added weight. The only person gaining from you not castrating a bull calf soon after birth is the next owner and there is some risk to them when they castrate at an older age.

Feeder calf prices dictate that the best time to castrate is sometime early, like before he's dry and 3 months of age. Unless you're targeting a market that required no growth implants make sure your knife is sharp at all times and use it. Many of you may choose to use bands for castration and that's fine as long as you are careful and make sure the testicles are below the band.

### **SHOW-ME-SELECT SALE 2022**

Guidelines for the 2022 Show-Me-Select program are at: <https://extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/ShowMeSelect/Docs/SMSrequirements.pdf> Enrolling may add value to your heifers. Next sale is May 20, 7 pm at Joplin Regional.