



# Dalebanks Digest

fall  
2024

## More Bulls, More Quality

Saturday, November 23, will mark the largest bull sale offering in our 120-year history. We kept the top 155 bulls from more than 250 bull calves born in the Dalebanks program in 2023. What's more, nearly half of these bulls will be the big, stout coming two-year-olds from our spring herd!

As in past years, these older bulls were developed last winter on a moderate energy diet and spent the summer and early fall grazing native Flint Hills pasture just north of the sale facility. The fall bulls were weaned in the late spring, also grazed pasture through the summer, and have been on a moderate energy ration since August. Just like always, all of them represent the top end—both phenotypically and genotypically--of both calf crops. They will be freeze-branded, fertility-tested, vaccinated and ready to turn out on cows or heifers any time after the sale.

As we see the seedstock business become even more segmented, our family is steadfast in our belief that cattle should **SIMULTANEOUSLY** offer soundness, performance and longevity...not just one or two of these important qualities. We realize that there are numerous choices in Angus bulls today. You may find bulls that have higher EPDs for a given trait or two. Other programs might have higher actual weaning weights. Some bulls might display a fancier "look." And yes, there are certainly cheaper bulls out there, as well. But customers who have tried "Brand X" bulls and then return to buy "Open D" bulls indicate that finding bulls like ours that combine structural soundness, optimum EPDs, early growth, calving ease, and docility is increasingly difficult today.

We look forward to visiting with you about the breeding philosophy and disciplined culling that have helped us produce Practical. Profitable. Genetics. for 120 years. Call, text, email or stop by anytime!



## What is a Bull Worth? *Portions reprinted with permission, CattleFax Trends, August 2023*

*We receive this question a lot, so we're running this article from last year's newsletter.*

Bull valuation will be different for everyone, depending on their goals and objectives. The adage that many have used is that a bull is worth the value of five calves from the previous calf crop, and long-term CattleFax data largely supports that notion.

The CattleFax Cow-Calf Survey data results indicate that producers who pay more for bulls sell calves for higher values, and more of them retain ownership to a phase past weaning to take advantage of the value of those genetics. Survey participant calf values the past three years indicate that for every additional \$2,500 spent for a bull, the average calf price increased \$75 per head. Over a three-year period, if that sire produces 75 head of calves, that alone is worth \$5,625, a **125% return on the money**.

Using the historical correlation that average bull prices are largely in line with the value of five calves, based on the projection that U.S. average prices for 550-pound steers this fall will average near \$275 and 500-pound heifer calves average 8 percent less on a dollars per hundredweight basis, average bull values this fall and next spring could average near \$7,250+/-, a 41 percent increase over 2022-23 (and steady with 2023-24).

CattleFax expects all cattle prices to continue to increase the next several years. When cow herd expansion begins, bull demand and prices will continue to advance as well. Preparing your budget and bull selection criteria and objectives for your bull battery needs becomes more important in the coming years as the capital requirements increase. Bulls are a significant cost to an operation, but with the right selection for your objectives they also have the potential for high returns.

## Your Choice?

Cattlemen are faced with a lot of choices as they produce, manage and merchandize cattle today. Pasture or confined cow feeding? Natural or conventional calf production? Bulls or AI breeding? The list of choices is seemingly endless.

When choosing genetics, we are often faced with an additional set of challenges...the consequences of genetic antagonisms and correlated traits. Now before you quit reading for fear of a high-level genetics and animal breeding lesson, let me say this: **WE WANT TO SIMPLIFY THESE CHOICES FOR YOU.**

Many of you likely understand the concept of genetic antagonism: selection for one trait (such as increased weaning weight) has a corresponding effect on another trait (such as birth weight and calving difficulty). Recently, a lot of folks have determined some “perceived correlations” between traits such as marbling and maternal function, growth and foot soundness, and cow size and fertility. And while I won’t argue that there are cases when these might appear to be true, the data still does not indicate significant correlations between many of these traits.

However, when ANY trait is taken to an extreme level, the amount of selection pressure that must be placed on that trait (or group of traits) often reduces our ability to simultaneously select for other traits...especially if significant levels of genetic antagonisms exist.

For decades, our family’s response to this challenge has been to put moderate levels of selection pressure on the many traits that our customers desire. We believe that this offers a large quantity of bulls that deliver genes that excel in a large quantity of traits.

And while we subtly adjust these traits and their levels with each breeding season, the list of traits is generally fairly consistent from year to year. But to be certain, we periodically like to ask our customers which traits are most important when selecting your bulls.

To help us in this effort, we invite you to **help us choose the next set of sires that we use in 2025** by ranking the traits that matter most to your operation. Granted, these bulls will not be available until 2026-2027, but cattle breeding is a long-term proposition, so we must have patience.

**When you have 5 minutes, we ask you to go to [www.dalebanks.com](http://www.dalebanks.com), click the link titled “Your Choice” Genetic Selection Survey, and rank the following traits in order of your preference:**

### Maternal/Function:

Heifer Pregnancy  
Calving Ease Maternal  
Milk (high)  
Milk (low)  
Hair Shedability  
Body Condition/Flesh Ability  
Teat/Udder soundness  
Age of Dam

### On-Ranch Performance:

Birth Weight  
Weaning Weight  
Frame size (large)  
Frame size (small)  
Body Capacity  
Docility  
Foot Score/Pastern Angle  
Bone Circumference

### Yearling/Carcass Merit:

Yearling Weight  
Scrotal Circumference (bull)  
Dry Matter Intake/Efficiency  
Carcass Weight  
Marbling  
Ribeye Area  
Fat Thickness  
Pulmonary Arterial Pressure

Prioritize each of the three overall groups and then rank the above traits in order of their importance to you and your cowherd. Granted, some are phenotypic observations, some have an EPD to use, but we believe that this list encompasses most of the traits used by our diverse set of Dalebanks customers. If you have comments (or if there are traits not on this list that you have as a priority), you’re welcome to add those in the notes box at the bottom of the questionnaire.

For your time, we’ll offer \$100 off of your total bull purchase at this fall’s sale. Thanks for helping us continue to produce the best genetics for your family’s cowherd.

In some cases, hard choices must be made to make rapid increases in one or two traits. But at Dalebanks, we do our best to provide Practical. Profitable. Genetics. that allow you to choose “all of the above” whenever possible.

**YOUR CHOICE?**

A Maternal Function  B Growth Performance

C Carcass Value  D ALL OF THE ABOVE

*Saturday, November 23*  
EUREKA, KANSAS

**Selling 150 Bulls**  
Yearling & Coming Two-Year-Olds

**DALEBANKS**  
ANGUS  
PRACTICAL. PROFITABLE. GENETICS.

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CONTACT US FOR A SALE BOOK!

Pounds, efficiency, gain, marbling, yield... the industry always wants MORE. But those extra few pounds or percent often come with increases in labor, problems, feed or other inputs. For decades, we have focused on optimal animal performance AND labor-saving foundation traits like foot soundness, fertility, longevity, sound udders and docility.

While this “systems approach” to genetic selection may not produce 1% bulls with the most of a given trait or EPD, it results in hundreds that find that sweet spot between sensible inputs and optimal outputs.

## Managed Expectations

On his 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, the older husband was asked, “Sir, what is the secret to 60 years of marriage today?”

His answer seemed more succinct than heartfelt... “*Low expectations.*”

For some odd reason, my wife hates that joke. But I think it has relevance in more areas than just a happy, successful marriage. Be it the weather, your favorite sports team or—for this article—the cattle market, the human psyche seems to do better when we manage our expectations for the future.

At the time of writing this newsletter, hay prices are 30% cheaper than a year ago. Many protein cubes are 15% back from last fall. Calf and yearling prices are even to slightly higher than last year, and most of us have a much better stock water situation than we did a year ago at this time. One would think that we would be tickled! But thanks to a futures selloff (largely due to broader economic and political uncertainties over the past month or so), cattle prices have lost many of their recent gains. Had we not tasted the levels we saw last spring, times would look pretty good! Yet I have already heard some quiet murmurs within the industry lamenting the fact that commodity calves have not yet reached \$4/pound, yearlings have not reached \$3/pound and fed cattle haven’t exceeded \$2/pound. Is it still attainable? Time will tell, but many economists agree that it is.

Supply and demand fundamentals point to prices that will be in the trading range we’ve seen over the past year for an extended period. Unlike the rapid runup and selloff of 2014, most experts I visit with indicate that prices should maintain higher levels for the next few years...it just may be a bumpy ride as we go. And as an astute cattleman reminded me recently, the market is affected by a lot more than just supply-side fundamentals.

I have often written about the ironic fact that farmers and ranchers spend the bulk of our time worrying about the two things over which we have the least control: the weather and the markets. Sure, these both have significant effects on our business, but let’s not let our emotions and reactionary fears get in the way of sound decision-making.

By nature, cattlemen are well-accustomed to long-term business propositions. We know there will be ups and downs in the market. A bit of planning and willingness to invest in things that will help our herd’s profit picture years down the road is likely a much sounder use of our time and resources. We believe that Dalebanks *Practical. Profitable. Genetics.* can play a key role in this sustained profitability...both today and in the future.

## Emission Research Project

For the past two years, Dalebanks Angus has been fortunate to work with Kansas State University in the collection of gas emissions data on our spring and fall-calving heifers. Using GreenFeed equipment, heifers were individually measured for Methane and Carbon Dioxide production, as well as Oxygen consumption, during normal respiration. It is our hope that by quantifying this data, we can better share the real story about a range cow’s carbon footprint. Plus, these phenotypes can be used to calculate a proxy for metabolic rate, so we hope to eventually be able to better select for the most forage efficient lines of cattle we can find.

To measure these females, a small amount of alfalfa pellets was dropped in the feeder as a buzzer sounded. Once accustomed to the machine, cattle stepped into the feeder to eat for a brief time. While in the feeder, air that blew past their faces was collected and analyzed to determine the concentration of each of these gases and matches this reading with their RFID.

After collecting data on several hundred yearling heifers, the GreenFeed machine has moved on to another location near Manhattan. Our data is being analyzed by Dr. Megan Rolf and colleagues at KSU, and we look forward to applying the information in coming months and years.



**Practical. Profitable. Genetics.**

# **Annual Bull Sale November 23, 2024**

**12:30 pm at the Dalebanks Angus Sale Facility, 1030 River RD, Eureka, KS**

**Selling 155 yearling and coming 2-year-old bulls sired by:**

Tehama Patriarch	HF Safe & Sound
Connealy Commerce	Yon Top Cut
DVF Growth Fund	Baldrige Gibson
Connealy Cool	PLC Charisma
Sitz Resilient	E&B Rival

*Bulls with optimal balance of  
MATERNAL, CALVING-EASE, GROWTH  
and CARCASS TRAITS.*

**Contact Matt to receive your catalog!**



The Coming 2-Year-Old sale bulls enjoying a few protein cubes in mid-August.

*Contact us anytime to discuss how to add Practical. Profitable. Genetics. to your herd!*

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