

For many weeks we have stressed the importance of using your cattle to your advantage in order to have a profitable operation. To achieve this we have offered numerous management tips that covered areas of reproduction, nutrition, and pasture management. Although the recommended tips are all beneficial and may help an operation to be successful, it is important to not lose sight of the basics of raising cattle. The breed of your cattle has a huge role in the productivity of your operation. For the next few weeks we will be discussing the Angus, Hereford, Charolais, and Brahman breeds of cattle to point out the subtle differences in these breeds, and how you can use these differences to positively influence your existing herd of cattle.

Angus cattle were first brought to American in the late 1800s from Northern England. Soon after their introduction, producers grew to desire and appreciate the qualities that Angus genetics brought to the cattle industry. Now, 150 years later, Angus cattle remain to be one of the most popular beef breeds today. For many producers, Angus cattle are desirable from many aspects. Known for their moderate frame size, and fleshing ability, the Angus breed is naturally polled, and continues to bring many good qualities to the cattle industry.

With more than 20 million cattle records, the American Angus Association database is the largest of its kind by far. This extensive record keeping has created a high accuracy in the expected performance of Angus cattle, better known as EPDs. These EPDs are a great tool to use when selecting a particular bull for your operation. Due to the large number of Angus cattle, their EPDs are very reliable in helping a producer predict the expected performance of his cattle. With this high accuracy of their EPDs, it has been found that Angus cattle particularly excel in maternal related EPDs. More specifically, Angus cattle typically have low birth weights, and therefore have lower instances of dystocia. Angus females have also proven to have exceptional maternal instincts and great milking abilities due to their ideal udder and teat size. Although Angus truly is a maternal breed, that is not the only area that they excel in. Angus cattle are widely marketed as "Certified Angus Beef" for having superior quality carcasses that contain high percentages of marbling.

Remember to take into account the breed of the animal when selecting for EPDs. Angus bulls are most commonly used on first calf heifers, as they are notorious for low birth weight calves. Because breed itself is known for low birth weight calves, it is not necessary to put as much emphasis on an Angus bull's birth weight EPD. Rather, put emphasis on a trait that the breed is not well known for. For example, if you want low birth weight, but fast growing calves, you can use an Angus bull that has good yearling weight EPDs. This type of selection is profitable and ensures that the cattle are being used to their fullest potential.

Breed selection has an important role in how an operation will perform. What breed are your cattle? Are you getting all you can from those genetics, or is there room for improvement? Continue to think about the many qualities that Angus genetics have to offer, and how introduction of these genetics in your operation may improve productivity. If you have any questions about Angus cattle, or would like to be connected to an Angus producer, please contact us, or visit www.angus.org.

Thanks,
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