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Kansas survey: What do commercial cow-calf producers consider when buying herd sires?

Abstract
Recently, Kansas State University surveyed the factors a commercial cowman considers when he buys Angus, Simmental, or Hereford bulls. A mail survey of the customers of 29 purebred breeders of those three breeds was conducted. We attempted to include a reasonable cross section of both performance and show-ring-oriented breeders. A total of 1,447 survey forms were distributed and 613 (42%) were returned.

Keywords
Cattlemen's Day, 1982; Report of progress (Kansas State University. Agricultural Experiment Station); 413; Beef; Commerical cow-calf producers; Herd sires

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Recently, Kansas State University surveyed the factors a commercial cowman considers when he buys Angus, Simmental, or Hereford bulls. A mail survey of the customers of 29 purebred breeders of those three breeds was conducted. We attempted to include a reasonable cross section of both performance and show-ring-oriented breeders. A total of 1,447 survey forms were distributed and 613 (42%) were returned.

The Department of Animal Sciences and Industry expresses its appreciation to all participants. Results of the survey are compiled here so purebred producers can more effectively fulfill the needs of their commercial bull buyers.

Typical Angus and Simmental buyers rate growth, structural correctness, and calving ease as important selection criteria. Hereford bull buyers are less interested in calving ease and more concerned about fertility, libido, and color along with growth rate and structural correctness. Cattlemen buy Angus bulls for crossbreeding and calving ease, whereas they buy Simmental bulls for increased progeny growth and maternal traits of daughters. Hereford bulls are chosen for heterosis in a crossbreeding program or to use in purebred Hereford herds. Concerning future breed improvements, Angus and Hereford bull buyers would like improved growth, performance, and frame; Simmental bull buyers are interested in calving ease.

Commercial buyers of all three breeds said that price is a key factor in their choice of a commercial bull; $1,500-$2,000 was listed most frequently as upper price limit. Buyers of all breeds want to see the weaning weights, yearling weights, average daily gains and birth weights of bulls. Angus and Hereford bull buyers indicated they prefer 2-year-old bulls, whereas Simmental buyers are slightly more interested in 18- to 24-month-old bulls. Hereford bull buyers tend to resist yearling bulls, but cattlemen using yearling bulls of all three breeds said they expose them to 10 to 20 or more cows. Angus buyers indicated that their cow herds are mainly Angus, whereas Simmental buyers have mainly Hereford cows. Of the Hereford buyers surveyed, 75% listed Hereford as their main cow breed. There are additional services buyers seemingly want from purebred producers:
1) Breeder follow-up after progeny are on the ground.
2) Calving ease and birth-weight information.
3) Libido and fertility testing information.
4) Sire and dam observation and performance records.

Following are the responses to four questions appearing on the survey form:
Question 1: What are three or four of the most important traits or factors you consider in buying a herd bull?

Responses considered to be growth traits were: weaning weights, yearling weight, average daily gain or feedlot gain, feed efficiency, and some indication of frame including size, weight, and length.

Response:  
- Angus: Growth, size, frame, etc. 85%  
- Simmental: 84%  
- Hereford: 83%

Conformation, structural correctness, soundness, muscling
- Angus: 73%  
- Simmental: 54%  
- Hereford: 75%

Calving ease
- Angus: 23%  
- Simmental: 56%  
- Hereford: 7%

Disposition
- Angus: 20%  
- Simmental: 22%  
- Hereford: 16%

Masculinity, fertility, libido
- Angus: 18%  
- Simmental: 11%  
- Hereford: 22%

Pedigree, bloodlines, total records
- Angus: 5%  
- Simmental: 9%  
- Hereford: 16%

Cost, price, buyer acceptance
- Angus: 5%  
- Simmental: 10%  
- Hereford: 8%

Color
- Angus: 11%  
- Simmental: 10%  
- Hereford: 20%

Maternal traits of dam
- Angus: 4%  
- Simmental: 11%  
- Hereford: 13%

Breeder reputation
- Angus: 4%  
- Simmental: 4%  
- Hereford: 4%

Polled/horned

Question 2: Why do you buy (breed) bulls?

Response:  
- Angus: Increased growth 70%  
- Simmental: 16%  
- Hereford: 16%

Crossbreeding, heterosis
- Angus: 48%  
- Simmental: 18%  
- Hereford: 30%

Calving ease
- Angus: 38%  
- Simmental: 7%  
- Hereford: 4%

Keep purebred herd
- Angus: 17%  
- Simmental: 12%  
- Hereford: 4%

Polled progeny
- Angus: 6%  
- Simmental: 3%  
- Hereford: 3%

Marketability of calves
- Angus: 4%  
- Simmental: 23%  
- Hereford: 3%

Carcass grading capabilities
- Angus: 3%  
- Simmental: 23%  
- Hereford: 9%

Less eye problems
- Angus: 3%  
- Simmental: 9%  
- Hereford: 16%

Maternal traits of daughter
- Angus: 2%  
- Simmental: 10%  
- Hereford: 17%

Libido, fertility, aggressiveness
- Angus: 3%  
- Simmental: 3%  
- Hereford: 4%

Disposition
- Angus: 3%  
- Simmental: 2%  
- Hereford: 3%

Eye appeal, buyer acceptance
- Angus: 3%  
- Simmental: 17%  
- Hereford: 4%

Easy keepers under range conditions

Question 3: In the future, are there any improvements you would like to see in the type of (breed) bulls you buy?

Response:  
- Angus:  
  - Growth, size, performance: 35%
  - Frame: 29%
  - Length and stretch: 26%
  - Calving ease: 12%
  - Disposition: 11%
  - Muscle: 9%
  - Feet and legs, soundness: 6%
  - Less extreme: 13%
  - Carcass quality, easier fleshing: 13%
  - More polled bulls: 12%
  - Cleaner fronted: 11%
  - Darker pigment around eyes: 8%
  - Less fat on sale bulls: 5%
  - Fertility, libido, conception: 3%

- Simmental:  
  - Growth, size, performance: 16%
  - Frame: 25%
  - Length and stretch: 31%
  - Calving ease: 6%
  - Disposition: 10%
  - Muscle: 8%
  - Feet and legs, soundness: 3%
  - Less extreme: 13%
  - Carcass quality, easier fleshing: 13%
  - More polled bulls: 12%
  - Cleaner fronted: 8%
  - Darker pigment around eyes: 5%
  - Less fat on sale bulls: 3%
  - Fertility, libido, conception: 3%

- Hereford:  
  - Growth, size, performance: 29%
  - Frame: 20%
  - Length and stretch: 33%
  - Calving ease: 6%
  - Disposition: 8%
  - Muscle: 3%
  - Feet and legs, soundness: 3%
  - Less extreme: 13%
  - Carcass quality, easier fleshing: 32%
  - More polled bulls: 30%
  - Cleaner fronted: 8%
  - Darker pigment around eyes: 9%
  - Less fat on sale bulls: 3%
  - Fertility, libido, conception: 3%

Note: More extensive analysis of this survey can be obtained by contacting:
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