

EXTENSION NOTES



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Tips for Beef Sire Selection

The overall goal of a beef cattle operation is to increase net income by balancing what is spent on the operation with how much income it generates. A beef producer can accomplish this goal by increasing income while minimizing additional costs, or reducing costs while trying to maintain income.

Participants in a recent Bull Value Assessment Program offered by the FIVCO Cooperative Extension Offices learned that one way to do this is to improve herd genetics through individual bull selection.

You should assess four primary characteristics when considering a purchase. These are reproductive soundness, structural soundness, visual evaluation and performance characteristics.

Having a breeding soundness exam done is the best way to determine a bull's reproductive soundness. While passing this exam means he should have the physical soundness to breed and settle cows, it does not measure desire. Observe bulls for their interest in females in heat.

Indications of structural soundness are that the bull moves without pain or discomfort and has appropriate angles at weight-bearing joints.

Visual observation is one way to evaluate important traits. These can include disposition, color, muscling, horned/polled, body capacity, structure, sheath and testicular development.

Expected calf performance is a primary reason to buy a bull. If replacement females will be retained, the first decision will be the breed's productivity level. When the breed is determined, selection among bull performance should be based on the expected progeny difference whenever possible. There is no such animal as the "best bull," because selection should be based on what you need to get from the bull.

Remember that as you select to improve one trait you often lose ground in another trait. For example, selecting for increased growth usually inadvertently increases cows' mature size and maintenance when retaining replacements. Balancing cows' productivity levels and energy requirements is extremely difficult and if done improperly likely will result in decreased reproduction. Before you buy a bull, consider what you want to produce and what resources (primarily nutrition) you have available.

Bull selection has an important long-term economic impact on your herd. Selecting the right bull for your operation involves setting production goals, analyzing your resources and management and locating the bull that best fits your situation. While this process will take time and effort, it can generate significant financial rewards when properly done.

For more information on selecting a beef sire and other management decisions for your beef cattle operation, contact the Carter County Cooperative Extension Service. Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expressions, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.

Upcoming Events:

- **Backyard Apple & Pear Care** – Monday, March 17th @ 6:00 PM – Cost is \$40 and participants receive two pear trees. Call 474-6686 to register.
- **Hike & Learn** – Friday, March 21st @ 1:00 PM – Carter Caves State Resort Park
- **Northeast Area Livestock Association** - Tuesday, March 25th @ 6:00 PM – Topic: 2025 Eastern KY Hay Contest...Developing a Strategy to Win
- **Starting Seeds Lunch & Learn** – Friday, March 28th @ 11:30 AM



Cavel Bush “sells” a bull during a mock auction as part of the recent Bull Value Assessment Program.