

How Bulls are Selected for Bar L Ranch

Herman D. Laramore

Bar L Ranch
Marianna, Florida

Bar L Ranch, Marianna, Florida, is a 900+ head cow/calf operation consisting primarily of Angus, Brangus, and Charolais crosses. This is a closed herd with all replacements being produced on the ranch. The only outside additions to the herd are bulls. Replacement heifers are first-bred AI to Brangus sires, with semen provided by Hardee Farms, Camp Cooley Ranch, and in the past, Heldon Ranch. In return for free semen, I provide at my expense, prodigy data on their bulls including birth weight and weaning weight on all AI-sired calves and complete carcass data on steer calves. Therefore, I do not keep a battery of bulls just to breed heifers. The Brangus sires bred to heifers are all moderate calving ease bulls.

I made the mistake several years ago of buying a number of bulls with primary emphasis on low birth weight EPD's and learned that in doing so, I gave up muscling in general which affected my weaning weight, yearling weight, and carcass yield. Now, my philosophy is that if a heifer can't birth a live calf from a moderate calving ease bull, then I have not properly developed her or she is not the quality that I need to keep.

I select bulls using a two-fold approach. Visual inspection is an absolute necessity in bull selection. Correct

confirmation soundness, frame score, smoothness, capacity, easy fleshing and overall appearance are evaluated by visual inspection. If a bull passes visual inspection, I then review his genetic records. Emphasis on moderate calving ease, reproductive efficiency and growth are my primary concerns in selecting Angus or Brangus bulls, because replacements are saved from these bulls. Live calves that grow fast are the key to cow/calf operations since, under the present pricing system, we get paid by the pound.

Charolais bulls are used primarily in terminal cross. Moderate calving ease is still important, but I do not place any emphasis on reproductive efficiency or maternal traits. Here, growth and carcass merit are the most important traits.

As of this date, I have not focused on quality grade, but as more information becomes available, I will be considering this trait also.

Depending on what I intend to use a bull for in my breeding program, I try to focus on balanced trait selection, i.e. maternal, growth and carcass, at all times keeping in mind moderation and avoiding extremes.

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