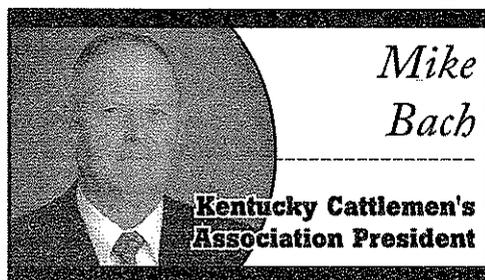


Find the Right Bull for Your Herd



*Mike
Bach*

**Kentucky Cattlemen's
Association President**

It's definitely spring – time to plant, a time of re-birth, and time to plan your calf herd for this year. We all DO plan our calf herd for this coming year, don't we? If we're not, we should be.

I have been able to attend several bull sales in our area. They have been well attended by folks from all over the state, which speaks of the realization of the importance of a good bull in our herds. It seems the quality of bulls for sale keep getting better and better. I see an improvement in all of the breed sales that I've attended. I think tobacco settlement money, the Governor's Office

of Agriculture policy, and research on EPD's have all done their job in putting Kentucky cattle out front. Herd improvement takes time and effort. It can be a slow process, but the results can put dollars back in our pockets. I commend the purebred breeders for trying to produce a better animal with each calf crop. If you

were in need of a bull, any one of the sales I've been to would have offered a wide selection, no matter what the breed.

The first requirement is to know your herd and what the traits are of the bulls you're looking to buy. Pick those traits you want to improve your herd and then evaluate the EPD's of the bulls at the sale you may attend. For me, it has been important to obtain a sale catalog several days before the sale and mark the animals that have the positive traits I can use. The day of the sale, arrive early and look over the selection available. Remember, too, there is no one perfect bull – one that is

right for every herd. It has to be a good fit for our individual herds.

The problem most buyers have is price. Most everyone can pick a good bull, but then the price goes too high. My general rule of thumb follows two guidelines. First, the bull is going to be half my herd. He will be half of all the calves for the coming year. Secondly, I figure I can spend what three harvest ready steers would bring. For example, a 1200 pound steer @ \$1.25/lb times three equals roughly \$4500. That sounds like a lot, but an excellent bull that would fit almost anybody's requirements can be purchased at these sales or privately in the \$2000-\$3000 range. It still is a lot of money, so it requires us to do our homework and not get intimidated at the sale. I have seen several good bulls with a really good weaning weight, milk or terminal trait sell for under \$2000. But you have to be ready to bid and most of us just can't get our hand in the air fast

enough before the "best buy" of the day is gone. (My wife might disagree with that last statement!)

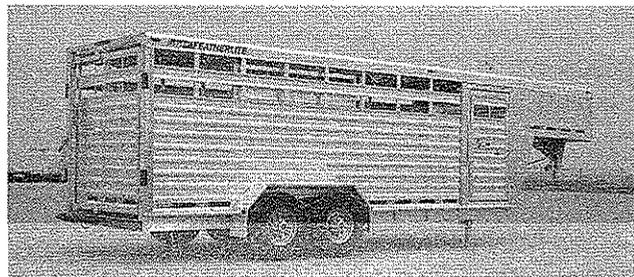
I remember when going to the stockyards and coming home with a good looking bull was commonplace and good enough. This is just not true these days. We must remember these bulls are at the yards for a reason. One good point that some sale barns have is semen checking some of the bulls that the seller pays to have done. This, at least, assures the buyer the animal is fertile, but here again that bull is at the sale barn for a reason and generally not because he is sterile.

Again, I want to thank the purebred breeders, of all breeds, in Kentucky for taking the time, effort, record keeping, and expense to improve their own herds so we commercial cattlemen can benefit from their investment. This reinforces the idea of us all being in this business together. I don't know if we are at a crossroad or a starting point in a new era of beef production, but let's all try to benefit from it by improving our herds with an excellent bull. 🐄

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