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

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K**Kansas Survey: What do Commercial Cow-calf Producers
Consider When Buying Herd Sires?****S**

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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	Simmental	Hereford
Growth, size, frame, etc.	85%	84%	83%
Conformation, structural correctness, soundness, muscling	73%	54%	75%
Calving ease	23%	58%	7%
Disposition	20%	22%	16%
Masculinity, fertility, libido	18%	11%	22%
Pedigree, bloodlines, total records	6%	9%	16%
Cost, price, buyer acceptance	5%	10%	8%
Color		10%	20%
Maternal traits of dam		11%	13%
Breeder reputation		4%	4%
Polled/horned		4%	

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

Response:	Angus	Simmental	Hereford
Increased growth		70%	16%
Crossbreeding, heterosis	48%	18%	30%
Calving ease	38%	7%	4%
Keep purebred herd	17%		34%
Polled progeny	12%		
Marketability of calves	6%		3%
Carcass grading capabilities	4%		
Less eye problems	3%		
Maternal traits of daughter	3%	23%	
Libido, fertility, aggressiveness	3%		9%
Disposition	2%	10%	16%
Eye appeal, buyer acceptance		17%	
Easy keepers under range conditions			4%

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

Response	Angus	Simmental	Hereford
Growth, size, performance	35%	16%	29%
Frame	29%		25%
Length and stretch	26%		20%
Calving ease	12%	31%	
Disposition	11%	6%	
Muscle	9%	10%	8%
Feet and legs, soundness	6%		3%
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%

Question 4: Are there any performance records you like to consider in buying a bull?

Response	Angus	Simmental	Hereford
Yes	85%	90%	86%
No	15%	10%	14%

If so, what type of records are useful?

Weaning weight	46%	59%	68%
Yearling weight	36%	44%	52%
Average daily gain	34%	40%	32%
Birth weight	33%	52%	30%
Estimated breeding values	8%		
Weight/day age	7%		
Frame score	5%	8%	
Libido testing	4%		
Feed efficiency	3%		
Scrotal circumference	2%		
Maternal records		11%	
All records in general		5%	9%
Pedigrees		3%	

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

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