

# Building a profitable cowherd ... Starts with selecting dependable Red Angus replacements

by Larry Keenan, Director of Breed Improvement

**The profitability being experienced in the beef industry continues to amaze producers across the U.S. Just as exciting, the analysts are predicting at least another year of record prices before the markets slow down.**

As a result, many producers who culled deep into their herds due to previous droughts are now preparing to restock to pre-drought numbers. In many restocking cases, replacement heifers can represent a significant percentage of the total cowherd. Therefore, producers must be confident that the heifers selected for replacements have the ability to solidify the sustainability of the operation. Red Angus stands ready to fulfill this need.

## **Commercially Focused**

Since the inception of the Red Angus Association of America (RAAA), Red Angus has

faithfully followed the founding commercial-focused philosophies, which in fact were one of the drivers in the establishment of RAAA. From the beginning, the Association has been truly dedicated to increasing the success of commercial producers who utilize Red Angus genetics in their operation.

This is largely achieved by delivering to commercial producers the ultimate profit-driving combination of reliable genetic evaluations and value-adding tools for the resulting commercial progeny. These philosophies provide the foundation for the tremendous success



## Selecting dependable Red Angus replacements

that our members and commercial producers continue to enjoy today.

Red Angus genetics must perform to the standards of the toughest commercial producers; thus, Red Angus cattle are genetically evaluated in a commercial setting. Appreciating the fact that commercial producers depend on the entire herd for profitability, not just the top 50 percent, Red Angus adopted Total Herd Reporting (THR) in 1995.

THR requires each member to report the performance of every cow in the herd through the submission of weaning weight of her progeny. Such complete contemporary group reporting serves as the backbone in providing commercial producers with the most reliable genetic selection tools to use in their selection decisions. Obviously, the built-in reliability that results from THR-based evaluations are passed on to the commercial progeny, thus providing producers with dependable replacement heifers.

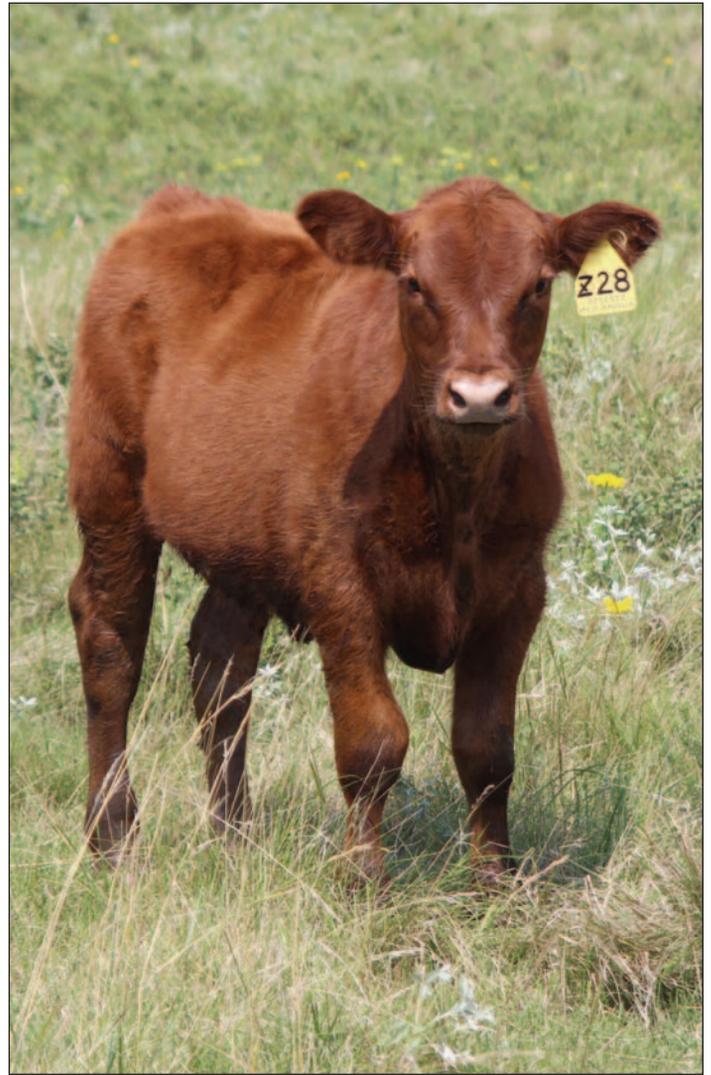
Total Herd Reporting serves to not only provide unbiased genetic evaluations on the calf crop, but as well, we are able to record the production of every Red Angus cow, therefore, enabling RAAA to provide genetic predictions on maternal production traits that have a significant impact on commercial producer profitability. Only through THR, can you truly assess the productive lifespan of a sire's daughters, as through THR we have access to every cow's calving records.

### Keeping Them in the Herd

This allows Red Angus to provide profit-demanding commercial producers with the most critical herd-building tool



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– Stayability EPD – which predicts the ability of a sire's daughters remaining productive in the herd until at least 6 years of age. Holding true to the commercial focus, once females enter the cowherd, Red Angus' Stayability EPD calculation requires those females to calve every year in the same season until 6 years of age, and not be culled for any non-reproductive reason (disposition, feet, udder, etc.) in order to receive a positive stayability observation.

Stayability is by far the most economically relevant trait impacting commercial operations profitability. Producers who focus on increasing longevity enjoy the ability to spread the costs associated with placing females into production over a greater number of marketed offspring. Additionally, by increasing stayability, producers are able to cash crop a higher percentage of the heifer calf crop as fewer replacements are required to maintain stocking rates.

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Herds that excel in stayability enjoy the ability to directly reduce exposure to costs of placing additional females into production (open heifers, calving difficulty, etc.). Through placing emphasis on the Stayability EPD, producers are able to simultaneously maximize revenue and minimize expenses, which obviously has a positive impact on profitability.

### Getting Them Bred

Another herd-building tool provided through THR is the Heifer Pregnancy (HPG) EPD. Through submitting the recommended data to stay in compliance with THR rules, our members inform us which retained yearling heifers were exposed to breeding.

Through THR, we are able to determine which exposures resulted in an actual calving event, thus, truly measuring fertility. Selecting replacement heifers sired by Red Angus bulls with a favorable HPG EPD increases heifer pregnancy rates, therefore increasing rancher's profitability.

### A Focused Foundation

Red Angus has focused on delivering reliable genetic selection tools based on objective tests from the commencement of RAAA. Requiring submission of weaning weight

data on all registered animals in 1954 is a testament to this focus. Building upon this philosophical foundation, Red Angus continues to provide members and commercial producers with dependable EPDs on all traits of economic importance.

Whether you market weaned calves or retain ownership in the feedyard and sell your calf crop on a carcass grid, Red Angus has the tools necessary to maximize revenue. Combining the herd-building tools of stayability and heifer pregnancy, along with Red Angus' reliable genetic predictions for calving ease, growth and carcass merit, provides commercial producers with an ideal suite of tools to develop profitable cowherds.

As commercial producers begin restocking the nation's cowherd, emphasis must be placed on herd-building traits, thus, providing a greater opportunity for long-term profitability and success.

**Red Angus stakeholders enjoy the benefit of having dependable EPDs to drive selection for these herd-building traits. As a result, commercial producers selecting Red Angus replacement heifers can trust that their investment will have a positive return. ■**

