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Staying true
to the Legacy



Dave Winninger

Winter 2008

“The help I get are the cows I never have to touch. . .”

I met Jeff Ward in '92 when he was selecting cattle from Jorgensens' in Winner, South Dakota. That would be before Sinclair Cattle Company was created, and a year before 4465 was conceived there at Jorgensens'. My wife, Lora, and I have an E.T. service, Cow Country Genetics, but we also have a little ranch on which we run cattle for Sinclair Cattle Company. Our deal with Sinclair has been on a handshake for about 16 years. Once in a while, Jeff and I cruise around to look at cattle and visit, and he asked me to visit with you.



Dave Winninger • photo by Heidi Werbelow

We have a lot going on, and somebody has to look after the details—that's Lora, but she can't tend to 325 baby calves. That's why we “hire” 325 mamma cows. Their job is easy if they love it, stinking difficult if they don't. And I don't have time to teach each one how to do it. These cows need some common sense, some innovative ability, some hustle and sure enough need to take orders. They also need to get it when I am having a bad day.

Most states have employment “at will,” meaning that an employee can quit if they want, and I can sure cull a cow if she doesn't do her job. Jeff and I have a thing going- if a cow gives me a problem, any problem, she goes into the recipient pen. We don't want to carry her genetics forward in this breeding program. If she doesn't

conceive to an embryo, she goes to town.

I'm darn sure overworked, so I need more help. You do too. The help I get are the cows I never have to touch. No pulling calves, no suckling, no bad feet, no hanging around the barn because they can't keep up with the rest, no getting out, no getting sick (she and her calf), and no touching me. I'm getting older, and this one is getting more and more important all the time.

One time Lora and I were at a conference in Denver, and they had this panel of smart guys evaluating feeder cattle- professors, purebred types, researchers, and this one cowboy/cow trader. This thin, gaunt steer came in and most of the panel criticized him unmercifully- poor

muscling, poor conformation, poor hair coat and mixed unknown ancestry. Then this cowboy rubbed his balding head and said that the

As Tom Elliott once told me, “People & friendships come first.” I wholeheartedly believe this to be



Jeff Ward

true and would like to share some thoughts of one of those people with you. I hope you find this to be as thought provoking as the many conversations I have had with him. Dave Winninger & I have been affiliated with each other for a number of years and there is no better test than the test of time.



Sinclair 1st Calf Heifer with calf in Wyoming • photo by Heidi Werbelow

most money made may be on this calf, for he won't cost much and he has a lot of compensatory gain to give that is going to be cheap. I thought, "Now here is a guy that knows what works." I can remember a cow forever, but I can't remember that man's name.

Anyway, I'm rather into what works, both in our embryo transfer business and in the cows that we manage for Sinclair Cattle Company.

Publicity many times overshadows or distorts what works- it is easier to promote an extreme that is new or different than to promote what is in the middle of the bell curve that works. On my dad's ranch, I saw an antelope running around with his lower jaw shot off; some one tried

for a head shot and missed by a few inches. I'd rather aim in the middle of the ribcage, where I can miss and the shot is still fatal. To get sales we promote things as innovative and new, but what works, works. George Strait still wears Wranglers, and so do I.

We have raised a number of bulls for Sinclair that are in bull studs, but one of my favorites (Sinclair Excellency 5X25) doesn't sell a lot of semen, because he is just where we need them. Not extreme enough in any trait to be a "changer", just moving closer to the middle all of the time.

This economic downturn will cull some of us that can not keep up. Ones of us that can't cut costs enough, can't produce enough, can't sell enough. We're no different than a bunch of cows. It's not fair- some will have a bad stroke of luck, calving in a 20 below cold front and getting culled for not raising a calf and some will cheat and survive, like a robbing calf that ends up weaning at the top of the bunch. Some ranchers will make it by reducing risks, cutting costs, marketing well, and repeating over and over what works. I just hope I can end up in that group.

Dave Winninger can be reached at 307-754-2053 or ccg@tctwest.net.



Dave Winninger • photo by Heidi Werbelow

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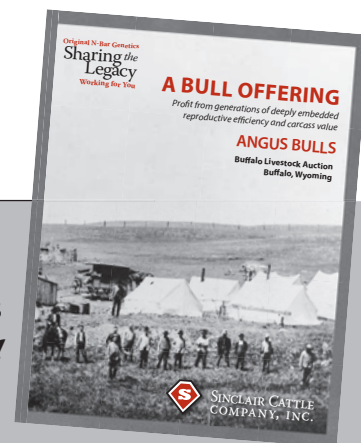


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“Remember, the animals have not changed and neither have their genetics! Only the base has changed.”

Dr. Bob Hough

The New Angus Carcass EPDs

Recently, following the concept of Economically Relevant Traits (ERTs), American Angus Association combined ultrasound and carcass data into one analysis. This is an overall positive move as it follows the concept of ERTs, but like any change does take some getting used to and needs explanation.

Carcass EPDs are an important tool for producers to use when kept in perspective with other ERTs. First let's define what ERTs are. The concept of ERTs utilizes the fewest EPDs possible to cover traits of actual economic importance.

The classic example of an ERT is scrotal circumference and heifer pregnancy. Yearling scrotal circumference in bulls is a useful indicator of puberty; thus bulls with larger scrotal circumference should have daughters that reach puberty at an earlier age thus having a better chance of becoming pregnant to calve as two year olds. However, the ERT is a heifer pregnancy EPD, not the indicator trait which is a scrotal circumference EPD. In theory, one would use the scrotal data in the heifer pregnancy model to add accuracy, but remember the trait of interest is heifer pregnancy. (As a side note, Red Angus found scrotal circumference confounded between size and puberty and did not use it in its heifer pregnancy EPD calculation, and has no scrotal

circumference EPD.) The new EPDs are on carcass basis with ultrasound data adding accuracy. This follows a Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) recommendation that was developed by a specially appointed committee to study the subject. After deliberating a year, they decided correctly that carcass was the ERT, not ultrasound, which is an indicator trait, and that EPDs should be expressed on a carcass basis.

“One must continue to pursue ultrasound all-out as it is still the best data gathering system devised.”

Dr. Bob Hough

will no longer be an intramuscular fat (IMF) or any other ultrasound EPDs. There were also significant changes in the model used to calculate the EPDs causing a further change in the base. This means people will need to readjust their eyes to a whole new base. For instance, current sires in the spring 2008 run prior to the switch had average Carcass EPDs of +.14 MARB, +.15 REA and -.001 FAT and average Ultrasound EPDs of +.10 IMF, +.22 REA, and +.004 FAT. In the fall 2008 combined carcass/ultrasound run, the new carcass base from which people will now be working had changed to +.24 MARB, +.09 REA and +.007 FAT. Obviously, the MARB is higher, the REA considerably lower and the FAT slightly higher. This makes it appear that the average

EPDs will now be only expressed on carcass weight (CWT), carcass marbling score (MARB), carcass ribeye area (REA) and carcass back fat (FAT) and there

Dr. Bob Hough currently serves as a Principle at Haines Centre for Strategic Management. In training for this position, he received 6 graduate credits in facilitation and strategic planning and management from San Diego State University. Prior to that, he was the Executive Director for ten years of the Red Angus Association of America headquartered in Denton, Texas. Bob was raised in Pennsylvania where his family had a general livestock farm, and received his undergraduate degree from Penn State in 1982. He went on to receive his M.S. from University of Connecticut and Ph.D. from Virginia Tech, all in Animal Science. His previous experience includes serving as an Extension Specialist in both Arizona and Maine, and as Marketing Coordinator for the Red Angus Association of America. While at Red Angus, Bob provided the leadership for developing the industry's first USDA Process Verified Program, Red Angus' Feeder Calf Certification Program. Bob also implemented Red Angus' carcass EPD program, and negotiated value-based marketing grids with two major packers. He was also involved in the design of the industry's first "Total Herd Reporting" program, which was implemented at Red Angus. Under his leadership, in 2002 Red Angus released the industry's first Reproduction Sire Summary. Bob served on the Board of Directors of the Beef Improvement Federation, received the Distinguished Service Award from the Red Angus Association, and was inducted into the Maine Beef Industry's Hall of Fame. In 2004, at the Association's 50th anniversary, he was named one of the "50 Most Influential People of Red Angus." With BIF he has served on the program committee, been a Guidelines author and editor for Breeding Herd Evaluation, committee chair for Whole Herd Reporting, and in 2004 received the BIF Continuous Service Award. He was also one of the founding members and the first Chair of the APTC Committee (now Ultrasound Guidelines Committee), which oversees certification of all ultrasound field and laboratory technicians. Bob served as President of U.S. Beef Breeds Council, on the Board of Directors of the National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium, and served on the Board of Directors of the National Pedigree Livestock Council. He has also written over 200 scientific, technical, and popular press articles, wrote the book The History of Red Angus, coauthored Breeds of Cattle (www.breedsofcattle.net), and has been invited to speak on programs in 27 states, four Canadian provinces, Ireland, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil. Bob has served on the steering committee for the National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest for over 15 years, and he has judged livestock shows in fifteen states, four Canadian provinces, Brazil, and Paraguay. He has traveled on beef cattle business to 49 states and nine Canadian provinces. Bob Hough can be reached at 817-296-0976, bobhough1@aol.com and www.bobhough.com.



R.L. "Bob" Hough

Illustration of Carcass EPD base change

OLD BASE

Carcass				Ultrasound			Current Sires American Angus Sire Summary Spring 2008
CW	Marb	REA	Fat	IMF	REA	Fat	
+5	+0.14	+0.15	-0.001	+0.10	+0.22	+0.004	

NEW BASE

Carcass				Ultrasound			Current Sires American Angus Sire Summary Fall 2008
CW	Marb	RE	Fat	IMF	REA	Fat	
+9	+0.24	+0.09	+0.007				

sire has genetics that are higher in marbling, lighter muscling and fatter. Remember, the animals have not changed and neither have their genetics! Only the base has changed. Although this switch will take some getting used to, over time people will adjust to this new base, and utilizing the percentile tables provided by the American Angus Association, realize they are buying the same good Angus cattle they always have been.



What are the other pluses and minuses of this change? I obviously have gotten the big one out of the way already, which is the base change. The major plus, of course, is moving to the ERT carcass base. With this, carcass will drive accuracy; i.e. carcass records will outweigh ultrasound data in the calculation of accuracy as carcass is the ERT. So, even animals with thousands of ultrasound records likely saw a drop in accuracy. With the correlation between ultrasound and carcass being about .70, it is my understanding that an animal with an infinite number of ultrasound records cannot break that accuracy threshold when the EPD is based on ultrasound alone and there is no carcass information in the pedigree. Thankfully, most Angus have some carcass data in their pedigree; thus accuracies should not change significantly. Ultrasound will still be vitally important in building accuracy

and proofs on young cattle. The major drawback with a carcass data basis is the data collection system.

Collecting carcass data is prone to problems. Although it is the trait of economic relevance, serial slaughter, harvest of culls and non-random mating all can be a problem. When done correctly, through structured progeny tests, it is expensive and time consuming. Still it yields excellent results when done properly. Ultrasound, on the other hand, is relatively inexpensive and follows the concepts of total herd reporting. The Centralized Ultrasound Processing (CUP) system was designed in which full contemporary groups were ultrasounded by certified technicians, interpreted in a certified centralized laboratory and the data sent directly to the association to avoid data sorting.

This excellent system is still state of the art and is the most rapid way to prove a bull. Therefore, it is important to continue to utilize ultrasound to its full advantage. Just because of this EPD change, it in no way diminishes the quality of the data gathered by ultrasound, its usefulness or the excellence of the data gathering system.

One problem does exist biologically with selecting against ultrasound FAT. Ultrasound FAT is positively correlated with yearling growth and REA. Meaning the better-doing yearling bulls do not tend to be the leanest. That just makes sense. However, the opposite correlation exists between carcass FAT and growth and carcass REA. Meaning cattle with fatter carcasses tend to be slower growing and smaller REA. This change would have been

an opportunity to drop ultrasound FAT from the EPD calculation, but that path was not chosen.

What should commercial producers be looking for when choosing Angus bulls? Carcass wise, Angus should be high marbling, average muscling and average leanness. It is a mistake to try to turn Angus cattle into a Continental-like breed and sacrifice the ease of fleshing and reproduction that are Angus hallmarks. It is extremely important that cattle remain average size and low maintenance. With rising cost of inputs, this is becoming more important all the time. Angus cattle should also be able to be



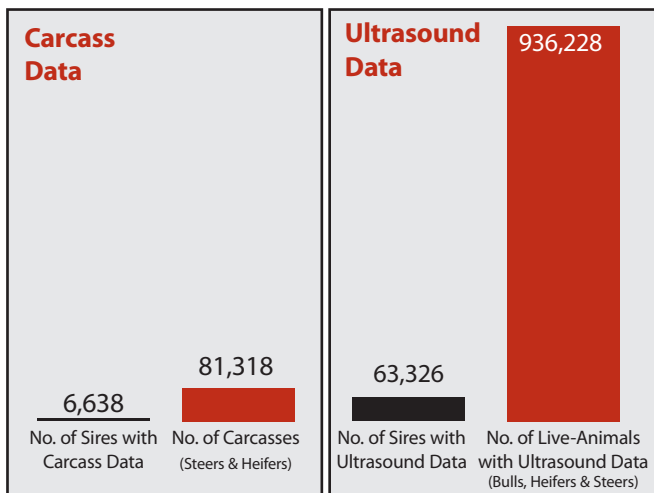
backgrounded and still produce an ideal carcass weight. Backgrounding is becoming ever more important in this time of high grain prices.

In summary, switching to a carcass EPD system has been

a positive change by the American Angus Association. It follows BIF recommendations, embraces the concepts of Economically Relevant Traits and utilizes the fewest EPDs possible to describe these ERTs. I hope the Association continues to embrace the concept of ERTs and consolidates more EPDs. These new carcass EPDs do involve a base change which will take some getting used to for some producers. It puts a premium back on good carcass data, but still keeps a meaningful role for ultrasound. One must continue to pursue ultrasound all-out as it is still the best data gathering system devised. Finally, it is important that Angus breeders focus on maintaining a balance of traits and the overall functionality of Angus cattle.

“Carcass wise, Angus should be high marbling, average muscling and average leanness.”

Dr. Bob Hough





Matt Lane ultrasounding Sinclair bulls

On the road with a hard-working ultrasound technician

An interview with Matthew Lane by Jaime Lane

Jaime Lane: Tell us a little about yourself.

Matt Lane: I live in south-central Montana with my wife and 2 small children. I have been ultrasounding cattle for about 14 years and travel anywhere there's work, to ultrasound cattle. I predominantly work in Montana and Nebraska but travel between Washington down to Kansas ultrasounding. I have worked in 8 different countries scanning cattle, training new ultrasound technicians and participating in beef cattle genetics projects. I have had the pleasure of working for Sinclair Cattle Company now for at least 6 years.

JL: How do you predict demand for beef ultrasounding work will change in the future?

ML: I believe that most commercial cattle producers expect if not demand that their suppliers of breeding stock ultrasound their cattle. Some commercial producers utilize the ultrasound data and the resultant EPDs extensively while others not so much. However, I believe that most commercial customers, even if they don't utilize the ultrasound evaluation, know that the purebred breeders are doing what they can through ultrasound to better their genetics and

correspondingly better the genetics of their customer's calves.

JL: What is the most common question you hear from bull buyers?

ML: "Where can I go to find some good bulls?" The first thing a commercial buyer needs to do is locate a source of bulls that comes from a breeder with a program. You, as a bull buyer, need to find a program with goals and objectives whose strong points match up with your goals and needs. In other words, find a breeder that knows where he is and knows where he is going. Find a breeder that understands you and can help you in sourcing genetics that will help you meet your goals. Find a breeder whose cattle have to perform in a real-world environment to help you determine the differences in their cattle so you can make an informed decision when selecting bulls to use in your program. Finally, a cattle program is only as good as the people that are behind the cattle. Take the time to look into different producers and their commitment to working with and helping their commercial customers.

Another question I get is a bull buyer asking, "How do I use this?," as they point at performance data including ultrasound data.

It is very important for a commercial buyer to know what his needs/priorities are. He needs to know what his cattle are doing in all stages of production and know where the emphasis or improvement is needed within his herd. If that buyer needs to improve maternal traits, then he needs to use that criteria to sift the bulls available to get a group of bulls that will work in improving their maternal traits. Once that core group of acceptable bulls is identified, then you can differentiate these bulls with secondary emphasis on other traits such as ultrasound/carcass, birth

Matt Lane has worked with us taking ultrasound images for a number of years. His work ethic, attention to detail and his pleasant nature always make those days enjoyable experiences. Matt & I share many common



Jeff Ward

interests and the times we have been together in Argentina will always be memorable. Matt always finds the best places to eat and works well as an interpreter. Working with Matt has been a great asset to Sinclair Cattle Company and all of us here feel Matt is "one of the good ones."

weights, weaning weights etc. Again, the customer needs to know what his/her cattle are doing to know where to focus in the carcass realm. If a bull buyer isn't certain where his cattle are as far as carcass traits, then it's always good to fall back to select cattle that balanced for their carcass traits and are not exceedingly below average on any one trait. It is better to use bulls that are adequate to a little better than adequate in all traits than it is to use a bull that excels in a single ultrasound carcass trait while falling short in others. Because carcass traits are fairly heritable, more so than performance traits, change can happen rapidly, so a balanced approach is very important when selecting for carcass traits.

JL: What is new in the arena of ultrasound?

ML: Recently the American Angus Association has decided to change the way they evaluate the raw data coming from breeders in the field to develop EPDs for ultrasound/carcass traits - instead of having the standard ultrasound traits EPDs and the old carcass traits EPDs based on the

slaughter data mainly from the 70s through the early 90s. The association now will only create and publish a single set of carcass EPDs based on a combination of ultrasound data and carcass data.

JL: What is the result of this change?

ML: For a number of years, the emphasis has been on ultrasound carcass EPDs. Purebred and commercial breeders have relied very heavily on ultrasound carcass EPDs so those are the only EPDs most people have seen with regard to carcass composition. Now those EPD values have changed. The base, so to speak, has changed. For example, a bull that most everyone is familiar with is EXT. EXT had a ribeye area EPD of +.29 based on thousands of ultrasounds of EXT progeny, grandprogeny etc. Now after the inclusion of the old slaughter data, EXT's REA EPD is +.06. Now nothing has changed with the cattle. Certainly nothing changed with EXT, he's still deceased. The only thing that changed is where the base is for the EPD. The scale was slid down in this case.

JL: How do you handle this?

ML: Do not get all wrapped up with the idea that all the sudden a bull that we've been using with success over the past few years now doesn't have quite as high of an REA EPD or that his IMF EPD is actually now a MARBLING EPD and it has changed. I believe the important thing to remember is that the only thing that has changed is the way numbers are calculated. There are two things that have remained constant, the cattle and the evaluation done within herd. As I stated earlier, if you have identified a breeder that meets your needs as far as producing bulls that can help you move your program forward, use their in-herd evaluation and comparison with ultrasound to help with selection decisions.

Finally, talk with the breeder and rely on their experience and knowledge. They can be a tremendous source of help and guidance if you open up the lines of communication and let them know what you need and what questions you have.

Matt Lane can be reached at 406-967-2418 or mlane@nemont.net.



Lewis Hagen

A Few Comments

For all of us at Sinclair Cattle Company, I would like to express a sincere thank you to Dr. Bob Hough, Matt Lane and Dave Winninger for contributing to this newsletter. This is the second time that Dr. Hough has written an article for our newsletter and we are very pleased that he has agreed to write an article for our spring newsletter as well. This is also the second time around for Dave Winninger so I suppose that makes Matt the new guy. In any event, all three men are straightforward, hard-working people and have earned every bit of the respect they enjoy in the cattle industry. We trust their comments will be of value to you.

Although we are not going to display cattle in the yards at the National Western Stock Show this year, Sinclair and Dunlouse Angus from Scotland are going to display native Scottish cattle at the 2009 World Angus Forum in Calgary, Alberta. The Scottish cattle will be on display between the dates of July 12th and July 16th. Patty and Larry Nissen from Chinook, MT are preparing the cattle and will also manage the cattle during the forum. We are fortunate to have the cattle in the able hands of the Nissens and darn sure know the cattle ought to be thankful!

We encourage you to visit our Website at www.sinclaircattle.com to view periodic updates on our bulls on test. We are including, for the first time online, a spreadsheet that provides detailed information on all of the bulls on test. We will also post a few photos of individual bulls as they evolve throughout the winter.

We have an incredibly strong and uniform set of bulls for the spring sale including several large sire groups of 30 head or more. The top end of the bulls will be offered at our spring bull sale March 28, 2009 in Buffalo, Wyoming. The bulls are being developed at Veltkamp Livestock located a couple of miles southwest of Manhattan, Montana. The heifer mates to the bulls are being developed at Tom and Travis Rule's facility located directly south of the Buffalo Livestock Auction in Buffalo, Wyoming. Both locations are quick and easy to access and we invite you to stop by and take a look at both sets of cattle.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family all the best in the New Year. It has been a pleasure working with you this past year and we thank you for that opportunity.



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Page 1

Dave Winner

On the Road with a hard-working ultrasound technician

Pages 6-7

An interview with Matthew Lane by Jaime Lane



"Remember, the animals have not changed and neither have their genetics! Only the base has changed."

The New Angus Carcass EPDs

Pages 4-5

Dr. Bob Hough

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