

Be Profitable . . . Now and into the Future!

By: Tom Wulff

What makes us profitable in the cattle business? Well, as all of us analyze our specific circumstances and environments in which we call “our ranch,” we come up with many different issues that affect one operator to a large degree and others not so much! But...there are a few specific factors that every cattleman must pay close attention to. These “profit factors” (as we like to call them) are not discussed much in the purebred world today where “high growth or extreme carcass EPD’s or High \$Beef” are the focus these days! The real profit factors such as fertility, mothering ability, structural soundness and disposition all affect one very important trait...LONGEVITY, and when the bottom line starts to get slimmer, longevity will make a huge difference in your ability to fatten up the profitability we all strive to achieve!

In our opinion, a long-lived age cow is the most efficient money maker you can have as a cow-calf producer! That 8-9+ year old cow is the most efficient forage utilizer and has the ability to breed back with minimal supplementation. We all have those good old cows that we know just do everything right and just make us money...we just do not have enough of them! It has been amazing to see the lack of conviction of purebred breeders to the traits that lead to the development of these long-lived aged cows. We have even had Association representatives brag about how young (now it is somewhere between 5-6 years of age) the average age of the purebred Angus cow is in America. Even the EPD system is set up to overly benefit the young cattle in the database. The system is set up to reduce the EPD values of older cows...and young cattle with young parentage have the highest possible EPD values. Their argument is that the quicker we can turn over generations, the faster we can make genetic progress. This, in theory, is true...but as we quickly turn over generations, we, by definition, eliminate any influence of longevity from the process! The traits that the Angus Association are directing breeders to select for have little to nothing to do with longevity. As our bottom lines have tightened over the past 1-2 years, we are pressured to make the right decisions not only for now but also for the future. There is no doubt in our minds that the most important move one can make to improve their profitability is to invest in genetics that will directly lead to a more productive and longer-lived cowherd!