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More on Lowlines

Feb 1, 2010 12:00 PM, Mike Hudlow Heaven Sent Ranch Fayetteville, AR



“Wow” is the only way I can describe Dan Hanrahan's comments regarding Lowline crossbred cattle in November *BEEF* (“Lies, darn lies & statistics,” page 57) .

Hanrahan makes valid points that cattle can too small or too big, but he missed the point that the cattle referred to in the article are 50% Lowline cattle with an average cow weight of 1,150 lbs. There is plenty of quantitative research regarding the efficiency of the 1,100- to 1,200-lb. cow weaning a 500-lb. calf.

At best, his definition of “value” is one sided. Value in marketing can be defined by both qualitative and quantitative measures.

- On the qualitative side, value is the perceived gain composed of an individual's emotional, mental and physical condition plus various social, economic, cultural and environmental factors.
- On the quantitative side, value is the actual gain measured in terms of financial numbers, percentages and dollars.

For an organization to deliver value, it has to improve its value-to-cost ratio. When high value is delivered at a high price, the perceived value may be low. When high value is delivered at a low price, the perceived value is generally high.

I've owned and worked with Angus cattle since the mid 1970s and have watched the breed transition over the years. No one will argue the contributions that Angus cattle have made to the beef industry.

My family has raised both Angus and Lowline crossbred cattle. Our production records mimic those of Adamson's, with the exception being that the majority of our cattle are 75% Lowline and 25% Angus. The calves are 75% Lowline, 25% Angus.

This past year, our 75% Lowline-cross calves averaged a 488-lb. weaning weight on grass. Their dams are maintained on native pastures and hay with free-choice mineral. Our hay comes from the surplus grass these cattle can't keep up with in spring and summer.

There are multiple economic scenarios that could be discussed here. But, to keep it basic, the profit margins for the cow-calf producer and feedyard operator are widely published and speak for themselves. And there's not enough time to discuss the cost and waste associated with trimming and

cutting beef to make it fit “the box.”

The Certified Angus Beef Program (CAB) was started 31 years ago to add value — it was a great vision. In 2009, CAB announced that only 8% [actually the overall average is 20%, CAB says] of Angus-influenced cattle met the CAB requirements. My questions are these: What were the cow, calf, carcass weights and cost to produce an Angus animal when CAB was created in the late 1970s, and what percentage of '70s-era Angus cattle would have met CAB specs?

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