

STONE GATE FARMS

OPTIMUM TRAIT GENETICS

Efficiency and profitability go hand in hand and there is no greater benchmark than fertility. It is the most important trait by far. Our cowherds are no different than any factory. Each cow has input costs with an expectation of producing a product year after year. Open cows or late breeders are a drain on your bottom line. So the important question is, "Can we select for fertility?" Our answer is an absolute Yes. It is the primary selection criteria in our yearling heifers. Our heifers are developed on grass and hay with a small amount of grain. They are then exposed to bulls for 60 days and anything checked open is sent to the yards. No exceptions. We want to produce a cow that can perform efficiently with low maintenance requirements. It is a simple process that takes dedication. It can be very easy to give an open heifer another chance, especially if she has a desirable set of numbers or has been purchased for a large sum of money. This seems innocent enough, but it is very detrimental if these heifers produce calves that are used throughout the breed. It has been our experience that any heifer that won't breed in two heat cycles will be late calvers and eventually end up open. Their daughters will more than likely be the same way and it does translate to their bull calves as well.

We have always been a proponent of optimum trait selection primarily because of fertility. When we select for extremes in growth traits we then see less back fat. Cows need to store up fat for energy before reproduction can take place. Also when we select for more milk or marbling we run into problems with fleshing ability. Creating hard keeping, high maintenance cows is a recipe for disaster.

Unfortunately, fertility is becoming a problem in the Angus breed. With mainstream members of the industry pushing the envelope on growth and carcass numbers they have inadvertently selected for lower fertility levels, while trying to compensate with supplemental feeding and false environments.

The Angus cow has always been the gold standard for fertility and maternal traits. Our goal is to keep her that way. She can produce more on less, if we as cattle breeders are diligent in our selection process. Holding to a high standard for efficiency will result in a high percentage of cows bred and a uniform calf crop. Which should keep the bankers happy.



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