

Horns Of A Dilemma: Of Cattle Management And Marriage

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A young man thought he'd gain some pointers one day upon hearing a couple of old-timers talking outside the country store. One fellow mentioned "the old gals" temperament, while another noted how well she did on what little resources he provided. The young man couldn't wait to get home and pass along such sage advice to his new bride!

Fortunately, the situation ended lots better than it could have because, after paying close attention, he realized the old men were talking about beef cows.

Temperament and "doing ability" are two important beef cattle traits seldom promoted, documented or sold. Cattlemen, however, have long appreciated the contribution of such traits to their overall economic situation and the sheer enjoyment of maintaining a cow-calf operation.

On more than one occasion beef cattle producers have opted out of using various cattle breeds, even though better weaning weights and marketability seemed a sure bet. They probably took one look at their working facilities and perimeter fences and quickly decided the old docile cows on hand were doing just fine.

In regards to "doing ability," more producers

than can be counted have backed into larger framed cattle situations, only to discover that forage demands exceeded the possibilities under their current management. Where smaller framed breeds could do fine on the pasture and hay available, the upgrade in cattle size required that forage management, and related investments, be stepped up a notch.

Other traits possibly overlooked are disease, insect, heat and cold resistance with the pendulum for the first three swinging in favor of Brahman-influenced cattle. As another example, cattlemen with an eye for detail often mention detecting differences in individual animal tolerance to fescue toxicity.

The selection of replacement heifers from within a cowherd is usually based on the economic influence of calving ease, rebreeding ability, weaning weight and marketability. However, I have to give the young man credit for what he thought he overheard. Temperament and "doing ability" are two important traits in cattle production, as well as a marriage, especially if you want to enjoy each day. Δ

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