

Association Outlook



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Manage for Success

This issue of the 'Shorthorn Country' focuses on AI sires and the use of AI in your herd, which can be very rewarding to those who prepare and plan for it. I personally believe that the use of AI gives breeders the ability to use the best of the breed, a tremendous asset to both herd improvement and breed improvement. The cost of semen may at times seem daunting, but in comparison, consider the cost of owning the bull and it becomes fairly reasonable for access to the genetics. Using AI provides options for finding the performance profile you may need to implement into your herd or use on specific animals. Your options are greater through the use of AI.

It is important to remember the extra time and management that needs to be dedicated to have success using AI. There are a number of things to check off before you attempt this process.

- ✓ First is the commitment of time to heat detect.
- ✓ Time to get the animal up and bred at the appropriate time.
- ✓ Plan ahead to have the semen available when needed.

These few items are essential for getting your cows bred AI. If you are not confident that you can commit to these without short-cuts, an AI program may not be for you. You can always consider sending your cows to someone who does it professionally.

✓ The process of selecting the right AI sires can also be time consuming. It is good practice to try to learn as much about the cow families behind the bull as possible.

✓ Totally investigate the performance data so you are comfortable that it fits your needs.

✓ Compare the EPDs and accuracies on the bulls.

✓ Look at the consistency of the pedigree

for the EPDs.

✓ Study the phenotype of the bull in comparison with your cow herd (or individual) you are planning to AI.

I listed the phenotype of the animal after the performance traits or EPDs, because I believe this should be viewed as an equal to the data. Only you can make these decisions. Do not use a bull because your neighbor is using him. Make your own choices and decisions and dedicate plenty of time making them so you feel confident. You do not have to compromise the looks for the right options that fit your program and marketing plan.

One area to carefully double check is that the bulls you select have met all of the requirements to be considered "AI Sire Qualified". In the registry, on the detail page of the bull you select, the upper left-hand corner denotes if the bull is AI Sire Qualified with an icon.



There is also a logo denoting if the AI sire requires an AI certificate released to you to register the resulting calf, or if the bull is a non-certificate bull. I would recommend looking this up on any AI sires you plan to use so you don't run into a snag when it is time to register those AI sired calves.



The use of AI can really make a difference in adding quality and value to your entire herd. It is important to note: A 100% conception rate on all of your cows bred AI is not normal. Different operations range from 40% to 70% conception on AI calves. This percentage is usually connected to the amount of time you have dedicated to the process.

It is highly recommended, to have a

bull cover the cow herd after using AI. That process is equally important. If you get 50% conception AI, then half of the cows are going to be bred to the pasture bull. These calves need to be as good as possible and have data that helps add value to them and their progeny in the herd down the road. You can use some of the same check list points when selecting your pasture bull.

I encourage you to look at AI as a tool to improve your herd and the breed. Total herd improvement results in major breed improvement that the industry sees and acknowledges. These actions are what will position Shorthorn in its rightful place in the Beef Cattle Industry.



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