

***-Cattle Business in Mississippi – February 2018**
“Beef Production Strategies” article
Where to Buy a Bull

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By the time you read this article, I hope that this snow that currently covers the ground is long gone. It was a cold January. The cool temps did not keep the crowd away from the 5th Annual Central Mississippi Replacement Heifer Sale on January 13, 2018. One hundred and four spring calving, bred heifers averaged \$1,678. I think the buyers are going to be really happy with their purchases.

Bull buying season is in full swing. It seems like there is a bull sale every weekend through the month of March. I love looking at bull sale catalogs and then going to a sale to see what the commercial cattlemen are placing value on. To me, buying bulls is a two-fold process. First, producers must select who to buy bulls from. Second, it must be determined what type of bulls fits your breeding program. With that said, this month I will address the top ten things commercial cattlemen should look for when determining where to buy bulls. Next month's article will cover bull selection.

- 1.) To me the most important aspect of choosing a bull supplier is finding the farm that produces the breed and type of bull that you want to use on your farm. Some farms are large enough to have their own production sales. While others will participate in consignment sales or sell off the farm by private treaty.
- 2.) Find a farm that can provide you with data. While weights and measurements are important tools, it is also good to have EPDs and pedigrees on bulls.
- 3.) Look at the herd health protocols. Have the bulls had a breeding soundness exam performed by a veterinarian? Are they up-to-date on vaccinations?
- 4.) Not every bull calf born on an operation is worthy of being sold as a herd sire. I always recommend buying herd sires from programs who also market some steer calves.
- 5.) Select bulls from **Mississippi** programs. Bulls that perform well in your environment will likely sire calves that perform well.
- 6.) Buy bulls from someone who is willing to show you their cows. Now I will say, sale day is not the day to ask if you can go look at the dams of the bulls. Call the farm in advance and make arrangements several days or weeks before the sale.
- 7.) Don't forget about the juniors. There are several 4-H and FFA members who buy bulls to show at State Fair and Dixie Nationals. Many will offer them for sale once their showing career is over.
- 8.) How the bulls are managed and culled is important when considering where to buy a bull.
- 9.) Buy from a producer with integrity. Some producers have guarantees on their bulls, some do not. Make sure you know what the terms of the sale agreement are.

- 10.) Buy bulls from a producer who you can build a relationship with. To me, this is invaluable. Seedstock producers who sell bulls depend on commercial cattlemen to buy their stock. They should be able to work with you to find the bull that best fit your needs.

When you buy a new herd sire, you are buying into a program. This new herd sire will contribute 50% of the genetics of your calf crop. If you retain replacement heifers the impact of your selection will be even greater. Find the seedstock producer who can provide you with bull to fit your needs. Hope to see you at Dixie Nationals.

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For more information about beef cattle production, contact an office of the Mississippi State University Extension Service or visit extension.msstate.edu.