

## LIVESTOCK

# Alliance starts premium replacement female program

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### The Integrity Beef

Alliance was founded as a terminal production system to provide a venue for regional cow-calf producers to sell value-added

cattle into the feeder market. This production system has been wildly successful. Members regularly achieve a 10 to 15 percent increase in sale value and sell heavier preconditioned calves. However, a concern for those in terminal production systems has been, "Where do we dependably source quality replacement females that are as good as what we already have, will calve at the right time, have been bred to bulls with registered high calving ease and high growth Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs), and have been developed and vaccinated correctly?" The Integrity Beef Alliance Premium Replacement Female Program (PRFP) will be the answer to terminal producers' needs for dependable, consistent and quality bred females in the future.

The PRFP is designed to be a leader in the replacement female production industry. The protocol will address and try to alleviate most major concerns of replacement female buyers. To go about this, the Alliance



set forth the following requirements: calving ease, prescribed health program and a quality female must be used.

Of course in nature, there is never a guarantee things will go perfectly and as planned every time, but the Integrity Beef Alliance PRFP comes as close to a guarantee as possible. Program members do this by starting the process using (ranch-raised or

purchased) females that are at least 50 percent British breeding; not more than three-eighths Brahman or 50 percent Continental breeding; and not from dairy, Longhorn or Corriente breeds. Females must be developed to achieve 65 percent of mature weight by breeding time. All heifers must have a 140-square-inch minimum pelvic measurement.

Most importantly, the females ▶

## FORAGE

must be bred to Integrity Beef Alliance Terminal Program-compliant Angus or Charolais bulls. This means when using a proven AI sire, Angus bulls must be in the top 20 percent and Charolais bulls must be in the top 10 percent of the respective breeds for calving ease (CE) EPD. Only Angus bulls are allowed in a natural service situation and must also be in the top 20 percent for CE EPD. The bull must also be a high growth bull in addition to the high CE EPD. In order to be eligible for the program, the bull must also be in the top 20 percent of the breed for weaning and yearling weight EPDs. Using a leading replacement heifer producer who sells close to 300 head annually as a test subject, we tracked the calves out of this type of bull and first-calf heifers until being sold. Historically, the calves achieved weights over 725 pounds after a 60-day preconditioning program and still sold in the same year they were born and weaned. This proves buyers can not only get an easy-calving live

calf on the ground, but it will grow quickly and wean off with a heavy weight.

Additionally, females in the program must prescribe to a uniform health protocol for vaccinations and anthelmintics. There are several brands to choose from but only modified live virus vaccines that are safe to be used on bred females or calves suckling bred females are allowed. Additionally, only blackleg vaccines that are two milliliter doses are allowed. No generic dewormers are allowed to be used in the program to ensure efficacy of the product.

The PRFP will allow buyers to use modern technology to determine a quality replacement female rather than purchasing and making assumptions based mostly on phenotype and hoping she turns out to be a good cow. Females will be DNA tested and sold with a panel of six traits that will allow the buyer to know the genetic merit of each animal purchased. When margins become tight, as they

will with a larger national cow herd, you cannot afford to retain a female on the ranch that will not be an optimal performer. The DNA test cost is equal to only about \$3 annually over the average life of the cow. It doesn't take much improvement in efficiency or weight gain of the calf for the right female to pay for the test cost.

The PRFP is designed to help producers identify and select the right animal to become a profitable cow on their ranch. It is taking the standard female development programs to a higher level. Producers do not have to settle for just any female based on phenotype. They now have the ability to select the right female for their operation that will be most profitable during her lifetime. ■

