

Association Outlook



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Spring – Decision Time

As March arrives, spring is just around the corner, bringing renewed energy and fresh opportunities for Shorthorn breeders. Across the country, many of you are in the thick of calving season, welcoming the results of last year's breeding decisions. At the same time, you are making critical mating selections that will shape next year's calf crop. These decisions are the foundation of your herd's future, and striking the right balance between genetic data and visual assessment is key to breed improvement and long-term success.

The mating decisions you make now will influence not only the performance of your next calf crop but also the overall progress of the breed. The Shorthorn breed has always been known for its adaptability, maternal strength, and quality carcass attributes. However, in today's cattle industry, the demand for performance data has never been greater. Producers and buyers alike are seeking cattle that not only look the part but also have the genetic credentials to back up their phenotypic appeal.

Genetic profiles and performance data provide invaluable insight into an animal's potential. Tools such as Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs), genomic testing, and performance records allow breeders to make informed decisions with confidence. These tools

offer a measurable way to predict traits such as growth rate, feed efficiency, carcass merit, maternal ability, and more. As the industry continues to evolve, using performance data is no longer optional—it is essential to maintaining and adding value to your herd.

However, while numbers tell a powerful story, they should not be the only factor in selection. The visual assessment of an animal—its structure, balance, soundness, and overall phenotype—remains just as crucial. Cattle must be built to function in real-world conditions, and a well-balanced, structurally correct animal will always be more productive over time. Combining data-driven selection with the trained eye of an experienced stockman is the key to breeding success.

As you plan your mating decisions for the upcoming breeding season, take the time to evaluate your herd's strengths and weaknesses. Identify the traits that need improvement and select sires that complement your females, both genetically and phenotypically. The best breeders know that improvement is an ongoing process, and each mating decision should be a step forward in building a more valuable and productive herd.

Beyond individual herd improvement, the industry as a whole is demanding

more from cattle breeders. Commercial cattlemen and seedstock buyers are looking for data-backed genetics that offer real-world performance advantages. Shorthorn breeders who embrace both the science of genetic evaluation and the art of phenotypic selection will be the ones who thrive in this evolving marketplace.

As we move into spring, now is the time to make thoughtful, strategic breeding decisions that will impact your operation for years to come. Whether you are selecting AI sires or planning your natural service matings, consider the balance of data and visual appraisal to ensure you are breeding cattle that meet both industry demands and the legacy of the Shorthorn breed. By doing so, you not only enhance your own herd but also contribute to the overall improvement and future success of the breed.

The industry is changing, and the need for data-driven decisions is here to stay. By embracing the power of performance information while maintaining a sharp eye for phenotype, Shorthorn breeders can continue to produce cattle that excel in both genetic merit and real-world functionality. Let this spring be a season of progress as you make the decisions that will shape the next generation of Shorthorn cattle. 🐾

The Shorthorn Bull Pen



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