

# Commercial Bred Heifer Buyer's Guide

## Seller Reputation and Contractual Agreement

- 1) Written contract
- 2) Seller historic information
  - References
  - Length of time seller in the heifer development business
  - Website
  - Other information sources
- 3) Heifer Source
  - Raised, direct from ranch, sale barn
  - Number and names of prior owners
  - Other source information
- 4) View cattle in person (particularly on the first transaction)  
Alternately, video(s) to evaluate disposition and phenotype
- 5) Discuss offspring buy-back opportunities and pricing terms

## Health Program and History

- 1) Veterinarian reference
- 2) Vaccination history with specific products and timing
- 3) Calfhod vaccinated for Brucellosis (2<sup>nd</sup> ID and *Standard of Care*)
- 4) BVD-PI negative
- 5) Pre-breeding information - pelvic measurements
- 6) Pregnancy guarantee
- 7) Breeding Information – Synchronization, AI program, Bull exposure times
- 8) Specific bull information (registration #'s, papers, epd's)
  - Not just “calving ease bulls”
- 9) Herd Trich prevention program
  - Fence integrity and biosecurity documentation
- 10) Where developed
- 11) Likelihood of biosecurity breach or mismating

## Heifer Description

- 1) Primary and secondary ID provided
- 2) Source and age information if available
- 3) Available information on source cowherd for each heifer
- 4) Polled, or dehorned?

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## **Breeding Information**

- 1) Were they bred in their first breeding season (are they rebreeds)?
  - Beware of fall bred heifers from the North.
- 2) Length of time with bull (not just when they are calving)
- 3) Projected calving dates provided on each heifer
- 4) Guaranteed calving “window”
- 5) Date bulls in and date bulls taken out (in addition to projected calving dates)
- 6) Specific sire provided if AI pregnancy.
- 7) Single or multi-sire bull information provided for natural pregnancies.

## **Some Economic Considerations for Purchasing Bred Replacement Heifers**

- 1) Buying bred heifers is a long-term investment. Think at least seven years.
- 2) Avoid buying culled bred females calving out of optimal calving season because they cost less.
- 3) **AI** bred heifers are generally more valuable.
  - Higher accuracy EPD’s (*e.g.*, CED)
  - Synchronization creates shorter breeding/calving season
  - Superior genetics.
- 4) Don’t fight the market. Buy the breed that will fit the weaned calf market demand.
- 5) Direct purchase is often optimal. Specialized auction replacement females can be a good source if they have rigorous standards for seller participation.
- 6) Think of buying replacement females like buying herd bulls. The economics favors purchase over raising them.
- 7) Agriculture lenders will finance replacement heifers helping address cash flow issues.
- 8) There is a bred heifer seasonal price. Buying early can be favorable and offers opportunity for more selection.
- 9) Be open to buying pairs or pairs bred back (3in one) as they are often undervalued relative to bred heifers.