

# Marketing Heifers as Replacements

## Lane Holton

Holton Cattle Company  
Camilla, GA

Holton Cattle is located in southwest Georgia about 45 miles north of Tallahassee, Florida. We have a custom pre-conditioning lot in which we start mostly Florida calves for several of the Texas, Kansas and Colorado feedyards. We also graze or stocker these calves, plus many that we own, under center pivot irrigation systems. We own and manage about 5,000 commercial brood cows and are involved in a purebred Angus operation. But, one of the most important aspects of our business is our replacement heifer program.

We have three types of heifer development programs that all work well for the ranches we are working with:

1. Retain your own heifers
  - a. wean and vaccinate
  - b. graze on winter annuals
  - c. breed using rancher's bulls or ours
  - d. return to ranches in late spring
2. Furnish replacement heifers to ranches as ranchers specify
  - a. rancher uses terminal sire on his cows
  - b. advantages:
    - no maternal bulls
    - no calving ease bulls
    - no pastures to run open heifers or pregnant heifers
    - better utilization of pastures for cow and calf pairs
3. Through Future Beef Alliance and Bent Tree Farms
  - Furnish rancher a 2-year old heifer that has weaned her first calf.
  - Second pregnancy to a terminal sire.
  - Heifers bred specifically for maternal traits to include heat tolerance, frame size, milking and longevity.
  - Heifers are selected based on ultrasounds, hip height and pelvic area measurements.

## Heifer Health Program

- Lepto-vibrio
- IBR-P13, BVD, BRSV
- 7-way clostridium
- Deworm
- Brucellosis vaccination
- Tag or identify
- Good mineral program

## Grazing or Feeding

- Wheat
- Oats
- Rye
- Rye grass
- Hay or other supplements

## Heifer Program Targets

- Gains expected to be 2 pounds/head per day.
- Important to get heifers in production at 2 years of age. Must be about two-thirds of mature weight to breed and cycle.
- Most heifers will weigh 800 lb or more coming off this grass.
- Cost about \$200 per head, which includes feed, medicines, initial processing, and bull costs.

Heifers are put into uniform lots of breeds, hair color, size, etc. This is important if you are trying to sell replacement heifers to be bred to a calving ease type bull. All bulls are Angus with a birth weight EPD of 3.5 or less. We are probably a little high on birth weight EPD compared to most people, but we feel first calves are important, and we want them to have a respectable weaning and yearling weight.

- ▶ Heifers are exposed to bulls for 100 days.
- ▶ Pregnancy rates on yearling heifers bred to calve as two-year-olds run consistently at 90%, many as high as 95 or 98%.

Points to remember if you are going into heifer development:

- Know your customer and what he desires.
- Have uniform color and quality.
- Good vaccination program.
- High quality forages-heifers must be gaining weight.
- Breed to the right bulls.
- Do it right-repeat business is best.

**NOTES:**