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I have been directly involved in the purebred seedstock industry as a breeder and or Breed Association Representative for 35 years. Every day of my involvement has been a learning experience. Our industry is evolving continually with the advent of technology, information, selection tools and changing global requirements for protein. The largest impact on the purebred industry has been driven by the increased amount of documented performance data gathered by breeders, evaluated by breed associations and universities and molded into selection tools used by the cattle industry as a whole. Purebred breeders have used this data to improve the genetics provided to commercial cattlemen. This data and selection tools has also become a major item in the promotion of purebred cattle used by individual producers and breed associations.

A multitude of traits has been evaluated and incorporated in the selection process with individual breeders placing emphasis on different areas depending on herd needs, marketing demands and environment. One of the mistakes many breeders make is they become collectors of data and fail to evaluate and use the information they have. When dealing with many traits, my experience has lead me to believe that selecting for optimums is a more viable approach than selecting for the maximum in one or more traits. Advertizing and promotion of purebred herds has shifted from promotion of phenotypes to include performance data. This has driven the perception that more is better, not always true. Artificial insemination and embryo transfer has played an important role in the improvement of purebred genetics. It has also concentrated the genetic pool of many breeds. Is this good or bad?

As competition for the bull buying dollars has become more intensified customer service has evolved as a difference maker for many seedstock producers. This has been a very positive thing as purebred producers receive feedback on exactly what commercial cattlemen need and want. One of the biggest challenges for Seedstock producers is developing a long term plan, setting goals and having the ability to remain patient enough to see their plans through. The development of a successful purebred operation requires a long term commitment and discipline on the owner's part. Technology has sped up the process, but the generation interval hasn't changed! The basic goals hasn't changed either, seedstock must be fertile, functional and provide herd improving genetics for owner and customer alike. This is achieved only by gathering as much information on your herd as possible, continually evaluating that information and making intelligent breeding and culling decisions. An old timers' statement "keep the best and cull the rest" stills applies today. Mr. Dave Pingrey of Black Bull Cattle Company was my mentor, on his desk he kept the following statement: "Develop your herd using in herd comparisons' ratios among equally treated contemporary groups, make breeding decisions based on EPD's." A very sound philosophy, because if you keep cattle in proper contemporary groups, provide adequate nutrition, keep them healthy, record their progress, selection of the best will be easy and progress will come.