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My first experience with the purebred cattle business was as at 16 years of age working on a small purebred operation in my home community. We were collecting birth, weaning, and yearling weights to be sent to the newly formed Alabama BCIA. Since that time, I have been blessed with the opportunity to spend over 40 years working with purebred cattle breeders as a County Agent, Extension Livestock Specialist, Marketing and Genetic Director of a Purebred Operation, and serving on National Breed and Performance Organizations.

One statement that has stayed with me all these years was made by a wealthy businessman that owned a small purebred operation when he proclaimed at a state breed association meeting: " I know there is money in the purebred cattle business because I put it there."

With this statement in mind potential purebred breeders should study and understand the following areas of purebred cattle production prior to purchasing their first cow:

- A. Set Goals.
 1. Know your resources and establish the size of the operation in terms of land space and cattle numbers. Be sure to include separate pasture space for brood cows, herd bulls, yearling bulls, yearling heifers and bred heifers.
 2. Decide what area of the purebred business you plan to direct your resources. These areas can be producing bulls for commercial producers, producing potential show cattle, producing breeding cattle for other purebred breeders or a combination of these areas.
- B. Establish a financial budget.
 1. First develop a budget that includes expenses for establishing pastures, building working facilities, hay storage buildings, buying equipment such as tractors, trucks, trailers etc.
 2. Then develop a budget to determine the number of foundation breeding stock that can be purchased. Breeders need to understand that many times income will not be produced during the first 2 years of establishing a purebred herd.
- C. Performance Data and Record keeping
 1. Develop a plan for data collection which includes birth weights, weaning weights, yearling weights and ultrasound data. Be sure to keep this data in more than one location. The Red Book available to BCIA members is ideal to record data and keep with or in your truck, however transfer the data to another location such as computer or calendar to prevent losing the data if your Red Book is destroyed.
 2. Develop a record keeping system to record performance data and breeding data such as birth dates, AI dates, dates exposed to herd bull , pregnancy check data, etc.
 3. Be sure to send all the data on every calf into the BCIA or you breed association. Most breeds now require whole herd reporting. EPDs are

developed using ratios and all the data on all calves that are produced together should be sent in at the same time for EPDs to accurately estimate the breeding value of each animal.

4. Be sure all data is correct. The integrity of the breeder is the most important item in breeding purebred cattle.

D. Marketing

1. Developing a marketing plan is one of the most important and difficult areas of purebred cattle production. Just because a breeder purchased a \$5000 cow does not guarantee that first calf will sell for \$5000.
2. Study the many options available to market purebred cattle and decide which of these can be used in your operation. These options include private treaty sales at the farm, consignment sales that are run by BCIA or breed associations, bull test sales, hosting a production sale, or working with a group of breeders to market cattle.

E. Advertising

1. Developing an advertisement budget is important to get the most bang for your dollars spent. Many breeders budget 10% of gross sales toward advertising. A breeder must evaluate the many options for advertising such as state and regional cattle magazines, breed magazines, state breed directories, web sites, newsletters, direct mails, and radio to determine where to spend advertising dollars.

F. Customer Service

1. Customer service is important to retain repeat buyers. Customers can be some of the most effective and least expensive advertisement available. The phrase "the customer is always right" also works in the purebred cattle business. Treat customers the way you want to be treated when problems arise and be willing to do what is necessary to satisfy the customer.