

# Bull Selection: Your Roadmap To Herd Improvement

In a commercial beef operation, no other animal has more influence on genetic progress than the bull. Each sire used in your herd contributes half the genetics to every calf — and over time, those decisions shape the performance, profitability, and adaptability of your entire operation.

This guide is designed to help you make bull selection decisions that are aligned with your herd goals — not just for this season, but for the long haul. It brings together production targets, EBV data, and practical management considerations into one place. Whether you're looking to tighten your calving window, boost carcass performance, or improve fertility, this tool will help you set clear priorities and select sires that move your herd in the right direction.

*Use it this bull-buying season to review your current herd performance, your production goals for 2030, and stay focused on the traits that matter most to your bottom line.*

## Know Your Herd: Current Herd Performance & Goals

Use this table to record how your herd is performing today and set clear goals for 2030. Focus on production metrics and areas where improvement will bring the biggest return. Then rank each trait by priority:

**High** = Critical for improvement  
**Medium** = Important  
**Low** = Monitor only

## Know Your Herd: Current Herd Performance & Goals

Metric	Current (2025)	Goal (2030)	Priority (High/Med/Low)
Target Market (e.g. Feedlot, Backgrounding, MSA)			
Conception Rate (within 8-week joining) %			
Calving Rate (unassisted) %			
Weaning Rate %			
Critical Mating Weight (i.e. 60% of mature weight)			
Turn-off Weight @ ____ months (kg)			
Avg Mature Cow Weight (kg)			
Cow Condition Score at Weaning (1–5)			
Calving interval i.e. % of Herd Calving <365 Days After Last Calving			
Compliance with Specs (MSA, Fat, Oss, etc.)			
Feedlot ADG (kg/day)			
Custom Trait: _____			
Custom Trait: _____			
Custom Trait: _____			

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### Set Priorities Consider EBVs

Match them with relevant EBVs (Estimated Breeding Values), set a percentile goal (e.g. Top 25%), define your production target, and think about what non-genetic management actions are needed.

### Considering Percentile Targets

Percentiles show how an animal ranks for a trait within the breed. A lower percentile means the animal ranks higher — for example, 10th percentile for 200 Day Weight means it's among the highest performers for growth. A higher percentile, like 90th, means it ranks lower.

But higher-ranking animals aren't always the best fit. The ideal percentile depends on your breeding goals. For example, a low-percentile (high EBV) Mature Cow Weight may lead to larger cows — not ideal if you're trying to reduce size. In dry seasons, a Milk EBV around the 50th percentile might be more practical than selecting for maximum milk.

It's not about chasing the lowest percentile (highest ranking) for every trait — it's about choosing what works best for your environment and herd.

Need a refresher on the EBVs produced by our TransTasman Angus Cattle Evaluation, visit our Angus education centre.



Trait	Priority	EBV	Target Percentile	Production Goal	Non-Genetic Actions
Calving Rate	EXAMPLE	Calving Ease Direct	Within the highest 25% percentile bracket	Fewer assisted births in heifers	Maintain BCS 2.5–3.5; foetal age
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

### Know Your Genetics: Current Bull Team Review

Using Angus Database Search (Report Centre – Results Summary) to get the average EBVs for your current bull team. Then ask: does this genetic base support your 2030 goals? Use the checkboxes to decide whether to increase, decrease, or maintain selection pressure.

Trait Group	EBV	Current Avg	Priority	Decrease / Increase/ Maintain
<b>Calving Ease (CE):</b> Calving ease is split into two traits: • Direct (CE Dir): ability of a sire's calves to be born unassisted from 2-year-old heifers. • Daughters (CE Dtrs): Ability of a sire's daughters to calve unassisted at 2 years of age. Birth weight and Gestation Length also impact calving ease, but the most direct way to improve is by focusing on CE traits.	Calving Ease Direct			
	Calving Ease Daughters			
	Gestation Length			
	Birth Weight			
<b>Growth</b> Choose the growth trait most suitable to your target market, i.e. age at turnoff.	200 Day Growth			
	400 Day Weight			
	600 Day Weight			
<b>Maternal</b> Consider your mature cow weights, body condition scores, height and milk. Looking to increase the 'doing ability of your animals' consider your Mature Body Condition Score EBV.	Mature Cow Weight			
	Mature Body Condition Score			
	Mature Cow Height			
	Milk			
<b>Fertility</b> Lower Days to Calving indicates animals which are likely to conceive earlier, consider this if looking to improve your herds calving interval	Days to Calving			
	Scrotal Size			
<b>Temperament</b>	Docility			
<b>Carcase</b> Important to consider if you are being paid on carcase quantity, yield and quality or expect to be in the next 5-10 years.	Carcase Weight			
	Eye Muscle Area			
	Rib Fat			
	Rump Fat			
	Retail Beef Yield			
	IMF			
<b>Feed Efficiency</b>	Net Feed Intake (Feedlot)			
<b>Structure</b> Consider structural EBVs alongside visual structural assessments.	Claw Set			
	Foot Angle			
	Rear Leg Angle			

## Turning Genetics Into Progress

Selecting the right bull is more than just picking from a catalogue — it's about making strategic decisions that build the herd you want for the future. By knowing your current herd performance, setting clear goals, and understanding the genetic tools available, you'll be in a stronger position to make choices that drive measurable improvement.

Before attending your next sale, make time to go through the catalogue in detail. Use your breeding objectives and EBV priorities as a filter — highlight the bulls that align most closely with your herd goals. Always consider EBV accuracy when making decisions — higher accuracy means greater confidence that the bull will perform as expected. This groundwork allows you to walk into the sale ring with confidence, a clear shortlist, and a buying plan that supports long-term progress.

Remember, EBVs are powerful — but they don't work in isolation.

Genetics, nutrition, management, and environment all play a role in unlocking potential. The best results come when you align these factors and stay focused on what delivers real value in your system.

Use this roadmap to keep your breeding program on track — and keep pushing your herd toward greater productivity, efficiency, and profitability.

If you'd like a hand reviewing your breeding objective or making sense of EBVs before bull-buying season, get in touch with the Angus Australia extension team — we're here to help you make confident, informed decisions.

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