

# STONE GATE FARMS

## OPTIMUM TRAIT GENETICS



As we face the certainty of higher input costs and the promise of higher cattle prices, it's time to explore what truly makes efficient, profitable cattle. The cow/calf producer is the most important link in the chain of beef production. It is our responsibility to produce a product that meets the consumer's needs but is also efficient for all those throughout the process.

The structure of an animal is an important starting point and it begins with the feet. If they cannot walk, they will not last. Unfortunately, bad feet are being ignored in the name of genetic improvement. We cannot overlook this issue just to produce a great set of EPD's in our cowherds. The answer is not to hire a foot trimmer twice a year to go through the herd, that's not economically feasible. Any animal that shows up with screw claw, or any other abnormality, needs to be culled and taken out of the gene pool. It has always been important for Stone Gate Farms to produce sound cattle that can perform for however long they are needed in the chain of production and we do stand behind them.

The registered industry has also become enamored with frame size again, or lack of it. In our 70 year history we have seen cattle from belt high to head high. The trend is now going towards a smaller animal. When you start breeding for 4 to 5 frame animals with the idea of efficiency in mind, you soon get just the opposite. This will produce too many low 4s and even 3 frame ones that become too inefficient in the feedlot and in carcass size. You will also get bulls that are too small to service average size cows as yearlings. Our program has never followed the different fads with frame size. We have selected for the most efficient animals and they have consistently been in the 5 to 6 frame range, it is the optimum size for us. The picture is from the 1950s of a 20 month old 4-H show steer, let's hope we don't get there again.

As we move forward in building our cowherds, it's important to keep in mind basic principles, like structure, to produce efficient cattle. Don't let the lure of a magical set of numbers take our focus away from what we really need to be producing. If we concentrate on an optimum set of numbers and pay close attention to what we are producing, then we have a better chance of avoiding major problems that effect profitability.



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