

2009-2010 BCIA Bull Test Season Kicks Off

Joi Saville

Beef Extension Associate, VA Tech

The Beef Cattle Improvement Association (BCIA) has kicked off its 2009-'10 Bull Test Season with the delivery of 93 yearling bulls to its Culpeper Senior Bull Test held at Glenmary Farm in Rapidan, VA.

Tom and Kim Nixon, along with their children, Robert and Elizabeth, own and operate Glenmary Farm. Twelve years ago, with the help of Dr. Ike Eller and Orange County Extension Agent, Steve Hopkins, as well as a new counter slope feedlot and new working facilities, Glenmary Farms became a feeder of the Central Bull Test Station in Culpeper.

Besides custom feeding the bulls for BCIA, Glenmary Farms also custom finishes feeder cattle for slaughter, as well as managing the Sinclair Cattle Company Heifer Development Program. In addition to the cattle aspect of Glenmary Farms, the Nixon's raise turkeys for Cargill Meat Solutions.

As a third party administrator of the Bull Test Program, BCIA works to serve its two purposes of: 1) to foster the improvement of beef cattle in Virginia through improved genetics and management with major emphasis placed on selection criteria for traits of economic importance, and: 2) to carry on educational and promotional work in connection with the production of improved beef cattle. The Association currently has approximately 175 active members consisting of both purebred and commercial producers from Virginia and surrounding states. The Board of Directors consists of 10 members representing state breed associations and commercial cattlemen. Virginia BCIA is a state organization which belongs to the Beef Improvement Federation -- the national organization which sets guidelines and standards for beef cattle genetics (EPDs, performance reporting, etc.).

With the above mission in mind, BCIA sets forth strict requirements for bulls to be tested in one of their programs. Some of the eligibility requirements include: bulls meeting minimum YW EPD requirements based on breed; minimum frame score of 5.0; soundness; disposition; and pre-weaning and vaccination programs. In addition to the above requirements, BCIA has adopted a new policy in which all bulls are required to be free of genetic abnormalities.

In addition to the minimum requirements for test, bulls are also required to average 2.5 pounds of gain per day of age at delivery, as well as a minimum weaning period of 45 days and started on feed.

The bulls will be on test for 112 days. During this testing period, weights will be taken as well as hip height measurements, ultrasound data collection, and semen testing. At the end of the test, the top two-thirds of the bulls on test will be selected for the sale. This selection takes into account the bull's growth, average daily gain, frame score, scrotal circumference, and exceeding minimal EPD requirements.

The 93 bulls that were delivered to the test station consist of 85 Angus, 1 Gelbvieh, 5 Gelbvieh Balancers, and 2 SimmAngus bulls that were born between August 15 and November 30, 2008. Please visit the website, www.bcia.apsc.vt.edu to see how the bulls perform over the course of

the test. The bulls are scheduled to come off test on November 3, 2009 with the sale scheduled for Saturday, December 12, 2009 at Culpeper Agricultural Enterprises.

Watch for updates in the BCIA Bull-e-tin on the Southwest and Culpeper Junior Bull Tests. The sale date for the Southwest Performance Bull Test is set for Saturday, March 27, 2010 and the Culpeper Junior Bull Test Sale is scheduled for Friday, April 2, 2010.