

Cattle Business in Mississippi – June/July 2017
“Beef Production Strategies” article
RISE

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Fall calves are weaned, bulls are out with the spring cows, days are long and life is good. May was a great month! I finished my first semester of graduate school, had three field days, a county meeting, and wrapped up the month at the Beef Improvement Federation Annual Meeting in Athens, Georgia. A highlight of my month was serving as a keynote speaker for the Mississippi Angus Association Annual Meeting on Cinco de Mayo. Under the instruction of Mr. Paul Whitlock, my talk was supposed to be more inspirational than informational. I will admit, I struggled with the idea a little bit, but upon my arrival in Raymond it all came together. As I reflected back upon my childhood, the role the cattle industry has played in my life has provided so much more than a career. For example, I met my wife and many of my closest friends showing cattle. People whom I consider mentors – I met through cattle associations. I was afforded leadership opportunities through involvement in cattle-related organizations. Even if I had chosen a career outside of the beef world, I would owe a lot to the beef industry. My challenge to the Mississippi Angus Association was for them to RISE: Record, Inspire, Select, and Engage.

RECORD: For any producer, keeping records is crucial for profitability. As seedstock producers, recording performance data on calves and cows is paramount. To begin, I advise all cattlemen to make sure each animal is uniquely identified and to keep a detailed inventory of their herds. Seedstock producers are the drivers of genetic improvement within the beef industry so reporting their data to breed associations, is very important. When submitting data, contemporary groups should be formed correctly.

INSPIRE: As a member of the Mississippi Cattlemen’s Association you should inspire others to get involved. Additionally, it is important to get our youth and young producers active. If you sit on a county board, encourage your county association to involve a young producer. Also, recognize the county’s 4-H/FFA youth who participate in livestock projects at your county meetings. Inspire people in your communities to eat more beef! One thing that my wife was a part of back in Alabama was our county’s “Beef for Father’s Day”. Each year the CattleWomen would select a local father (usually a community leader) and present him with a platter of ribeyes. The local newspapers would pick up the story and the CattleWomen would get a pretty big return on their investment.

SELECT: Selection of breeding stock is the most fun, yet challenging aspect of beef production. I think every keep/cull decision should be based on the following question: “Does this animal make my herd better?” If the answer is no, then you shouldn’t keep it. If producers start with their end goal in mind and select the best parents for the next generation, then genetic improvement will be achievable. Always avoid single trait selection!

ENGAGE: Seedstock producers should always engage with your customers and find out their particular needs. The quality of our state’s seedstock is so high, it is absolutely unnecessary to leave our borders to find a new herd bull. We should also engage with fellow producers to market calves together.

As the temperatures climb this summer, remember that your operation has the opportunity to RISE past its current state by **RECORDING, INSPIRING, SELECTING and ENGAGING!**

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For more information about beef cattle production, contact an office of the Mississippi State University Extension Service or visit extension.msstate.edu.