



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
EXTENSION

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## NEWS COLUMN

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION  
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### **Don't Buy "Brown Paper Sack" Bulls**

URBANA – For years, corn farmers have gauged seed-corn quality based on more than 30 traits, such as drought tolerance and stalk strength, before selecting the best variety for their operation. Now cow-calf producers can do the same at the Illinois Performance Tested Bull Sale at the Illinois State Fairgrounds on Thursday, Feb. 23, at 11 a.m.

The sale has 93 bulls cataloged, including 63 Angus, 24 Simmental, four Polled Herefords and two Red Angus bulls. The sale catalog, performance pedigrees, and pictures of the bull, sire and maternal grandsire are available at [www.IPTBullSale.com](http://www.IPTBullSale.com). Contact Dave Seibert at [309-339-3694](tel:309-339-3694) or [seibertd@comcast.net](mailto:seibertd@comcast.net) for a hard copy of the sale catalog.

The performance test is based on more than 30 seedstock industry traits, such as birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight and maternal milk. It also includes carcass traits, such as ribeye quality and marbling, that are the backbone of beef cattle selection. These qualities are evaluated by breed association performance programs.

Performance tests provide producers with the most predictable evaluation available through Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) for genetic selection. In addition, most purebred animals' EPDs are complimented with genomic testing.

Beef cattle producers selecting genetics should also know where the EPD number for a trait ranks in a breed. EPD Percentile Rankings are available that rank each trait from the top 1 percent to the bottom 100 percent.

Besides purchasing a known genetic product, cow-calf producers must also demand other traits such as scrotal circumference, pelvic measurements, frame scores, docility scores and others to complement their cow herd. They should also consider health concerns such as Bovine Virus Diarrhea (BVD) and Johne's disease when bringing new animals into their cow herd.

While triple-stacked corn varieties come at a price, producers recognize the indiscernible value they reap at harvest. Today beef seedstock firms also have "stacked traits" available in multi-trait economic selection indexes expressed by dollar differences between progeny. For example, Angus \$Wean and \$Beef; the Simmentals All Purpose Index and Terminal Sire Index; and the Hereford Baldy Maternal Index and Certified Hereford Beef Index.

“Many growers are asked if they would select ‘brown paper sack’ varieties, even if they are cheaper,” said Dave Seibert, the IPT Bull Sale manager. “The answer often is ‘absolutely not’ because they cannot take the gamble by using unknown genetics due to their high cost of inputs.”

Midwestern growers would not plant an acre of corn without knowing the seed corn’s genetic characteristics. Now progressive-minded, economics-driven cow-calf producers should not purchase new genetics, herd bulls or semen without knowing where the genetics rank for the various traits. Beef cattle producers know that the cost of land, labor, feed, health and other inputs have steadily risen so they must use the highest-performing, most predictable genetics available.

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