

Besides a set of old scrapbooks that reveal a rich history in the Angus breed, Abbie Nelson's table is tidy, well kept like the rest of the place.

"It's not always this way," she says of the family gathering spot, "especially not during breeding season. We AI all the cows and that's always a big decision time." Books sprawl across the table, dinner plates replaced by spreadsheets as precise detail goes into selecting Five Star Land and Livestock's next cross, determining their own hybrid vigor, and so forth.

"We want to generate cattle that will go into our customer's commercial operations and increase the value of their herds," Abbie says simply. That includes making genetic breeding decisions that will put progeny in line to hit CAB marks. "We hope to do our part in increasing the level of brand acceptance."

"It's an added benefit to our customer," she says of the focus on quality and the subsequent dollars it can bring at harvest. "We look for high accuracy carcass EPDs, then of course we DNA all of our bulls with the Zoetis 50K test." They'll ultrasound, too. When it comes to marbling, \$W, \$B EPDs, "way above average" sets the threshold.

An ideal cow has a minimum frame score of six. Quick to cull on problems with fertility, docility, "We like a big top with muscle expression, nice udders, good feet and legs," Abbie says.

"I do like pretty cattle," she says. Years of showing hold too dear to her heart to ignore phenotype. "I'm not going to just breed off of paper. I want a bull to be attractive."

Specifically designed for the California customer, the Nelsons have both spring and fall herds, but are steadily transitioning to just the latter. Calving ease is particularly important for fall calvers as customers tend to use a yearling bull purchased in September and turned out with heifers in November.

If it seems like too much detail, it's actually on the contrary. Five Star's just another example of a registered operation that enjoys getting down to the nitty gritty and sticks with the Angus breed because of it.

"They're my therapy," Abbie says. "I love the decision making, the genetics, the indexes. 'Is your eye as good as you thought it was,' or 'Is this mating backed up by pedigree and performance?'"

"I just love the ride," she says as we gaze at the herd, the sun beginning to set.

Remember that good California light I was hoping to catch? I nearly missed it. But so be it when you start talking cattle.

Thanks for allowing me to tell your story,

Laura

PS – Ever wonder how Mark and Abbie Nelson have time for all the decisions that come into maintaining a successful purebred herd? That's not all they do. Check out our most recent post to see how they wear the hat of "host," too.

(resource: blackinkwithcab.com)