AN227

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An Overview of the Florida Bull Test[1]

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Overview

With the support of the Florida Cattlemen's Association and the University of Florida, the Florida Bull Test was initiated in 2000. The primary purpose of the Florida Bull Test is to serve as an educational aid for the improvement of beef cattle. The test standardizes environmental conditions for evaluating post-weaning performance. In doing so, it provides useful records for consignors to better evaluate breeding programs and creates a local source of performance tested bulls. Since the inception of the test, 803 bulls have been tested from more than thirteen different breeds. A summary of the number of consignors, bulls, breeds, performance and sale averages of all previous Florida Bull Tests are summarized in Table 1.

Objectives

1. Provide the commercial cow/calf producer a source of bulls that have been gain tested, thoroughly evaluated at the same location, and have passed stringent health requirements.

2. Provide an opportunity for seed stock producers to advertise their breeding programs through testing and marketing bulls.

3. Promote awareness and understanding of the latest animal breeding concepts and tools while showcasing superior beef cattle genetics in Florida.

General Test Procedures

Upon arrival, bulls are sorted into contemporary groups, and moved into 3.25 acre pens where bulls receive free choice access to a corn-based concentrate supplement, grass hay, and water. After an adaptation period, bulls are walked from their home pen and weighed on two consecutive days to obtain an objective average starting weight; this weight became the on-test starting weight. Bulls are inspected daily for any health problems that may have arisen. Intermediate un-shrunk weights are obtained every 28 days during the test. At the conclusion of the feeding period, bulls are again walked from their home pens to the main facility and weighed on two consecutive days to determine final test weight. Animal performance, specifically average daily gain (ADG), is calculated using only the official starting and finishing test weights. Throughout the test, bulls are observed and screened for structural soundness and disposition. Bulls deemed to be structurally unsound or those having poor disposition did not qualify for the sale.

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Evolution of the FL Bull Test

The first FL Bull test was initiated in 2000 when bulls of two ages (junior and senior yearlings) were consigned to the test. After two years, the bull test committee elected to restrict the bull test to bulls of a single age range that were born between September 1 and December 31 of the preceding year. Since then only bulls born during those periods have been accepted to the FL Bull Test. All tests were conducted for 112 days until the 2007/2008 test when the committee elected to shorten the test to 84 days. This was done to reduce the cost of the test to consignors. However, after two years the test was again increased to 112 days to ensure that bulls had sufficient time on feed to display their genetic ability for performance in a contemporary group environment.

Overall, performance for bulls has ranged from 3.40 lbs/day to 4.22 lbs/day. However, genetic differences occurred from year to year, based on breed differences and differing feed resources. In 2008/2009 a decision was made to reduce the amount of grain consumed and enhance the quantity of forage consumed. Therefore, daily gains were anticipated to be lower than for cattle on grain-based diets.

The FL Bull Test Sale average ranged from $1,283 to $1,981 per bull that qualified for each sale. The lowest sale average was associated with the inaugural FL Bull Test sale and the highest average was associated with the 2005/2006 sale, in which 94 bulls were consigned to the test. The trend in sale averages appears to be increasing with the second highest sale average occurring in the most recent sale in 2009.

Table 1. Summary of consignments, breeds, performance, and sale averages of all previous Florida Bull Tests.

Year	No. consignors	No. of bulls	Breeds (No. bulls)	On test ADG[a], lbs/day (days on test)	Sale average, $[b]
2008/09	22	65	Angus (40); Charolais (2); Limflex (3); Santa Gertrudis (1); SimAngus (7); Simmental (12)	3.40 (84)	1,887.00
2007/08	14	45	Angus (26); Hereford (4); Limousin (3); Parthenais (2); Red Angus (2); Santa Gertrudis (2); Simmental (6)	4.20 (84)	1,763.51
2006/07	17	52	Angus (30); Charolais (4); Pinzgauer (2); Red Angus (3); Santa Gertrudis (2); Senepol (2); Simmental (9)	4.22 (112)	1,763.00
2005/06	33	94	Angus (67); Brangus (6); Charolais (6); Hereford (4); Limousin (1); Santa Gertrudis (2); SimAngus (3); Simmental (5)	3.83 (112)	1,891.00
2004/05	40	128	Angus (77); Beefmaster (1); Brangus (14); Charolais (8); Gelbvieh (1); Hereford (3); Limousin (4); Senepol (1); Simmental (19)	3.58 (112)	1,716.00
2003/04	30	91	Angus (48); Beefmaster (2); Brangus (4); Charolais (7); Hereford (2); Limousin (14); Pinzgauer (2); Simmental (12)	3.78 (112)	1,767.53
2002/03	26	72	Angus (38); Beefmaster (1); Brangus (2); Charolais (5); Hereford (8); Limousin (6); Santa Gertrudis (3); Simmental (9)	3.77 (112)	1,583.33
2001/02[c]	15 (SR bulls); 15 (JR bulls)	33 (SR bulls); 32 (JR bulls)	Angus (18); Beefmaster (2); Brangus (13); Charolais (15); Gelbvieh (5); Hereford (2); Limousin (2); Santa Gertrudis (3); Simmental (5)	3.93 (SR bulls); 3.22 (JR bulls) (112)	1,560.00
2000/01[c]	41 (SR bulls); 26 (JR bulls)	117 (SR bulls); 63 (JR bulls)	Angus (67); Braford (10); Brangus (22); Charolais (22); Composite (12); Hereford (6); Limousin (3); Red Angus (7); Red Brangus (1); Santa Gertrudis (6); Senepol (2); Shorthorn (3); Simbrah (2); Simmental (17)	3.40 (SR bulls); 4.01 (JR bulls) (112)	1,283.00

[a] Average daily gain
[b] Average for bulls qualifying and offered for sale at Bull Test Sale
[c] Bulls of two age groups (Senior = SR and Junior = JR) were tested.