

Md. youth

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repeatability percentage will increase with age, as more daughters milk in more herds, so a high repeatability will not change much. A basic knowledge or printed proof of popular sires in the industry makes comparisons of "top line" pedigree information more understandable.

✓ If the calf is sired by a young, or unproven sire, try to find information about the bull. Will he someday have a proof, even if just on a few daughters in a few herds, or was he just a "barnyard" bull? Bulls with no proof leave what breeders often refer to as "a hole in the pedigree," or one less ingredient in the overall ancestry that makes an animal more valuable for merchandising.

✓ The "bottom," or maternal parentage in the pedigree is of even greater importance than the sire. Consider the dam's production records and classification, and the age at which she made the record. Compare her records to other herdmates if

possible. Did she produce more or less than other cows in the herd? Is she producing less because she's just a young cow in her first lactation? If she's an older, more mature dam, did she calve back at regular intervals? What is her "index," the computerized ranking of an animal on her genetic potential?

✓ Study the dam's classification breakdown, if available, which describes the physical traits of her overall general appearance, mammary system, body capacity and dairy character.

✓ Go back further in the pedigree and study the family of the grandsire and granddam. Were they better producing cows? Is there classification information available as to their type?

✓ Some sale catalogs or advertising material may offer additional information on the family, such as a maternal sister that was a high-scoring or high record-producing individual, or show winnings of the family.

✓ Study the calf itself, carefully and thoroughly. Does it show any signs of physical injuries, poor health, lack of proper feeding?

Look for possible genetic defects, (angled or offset) such as "wry" tail or head.

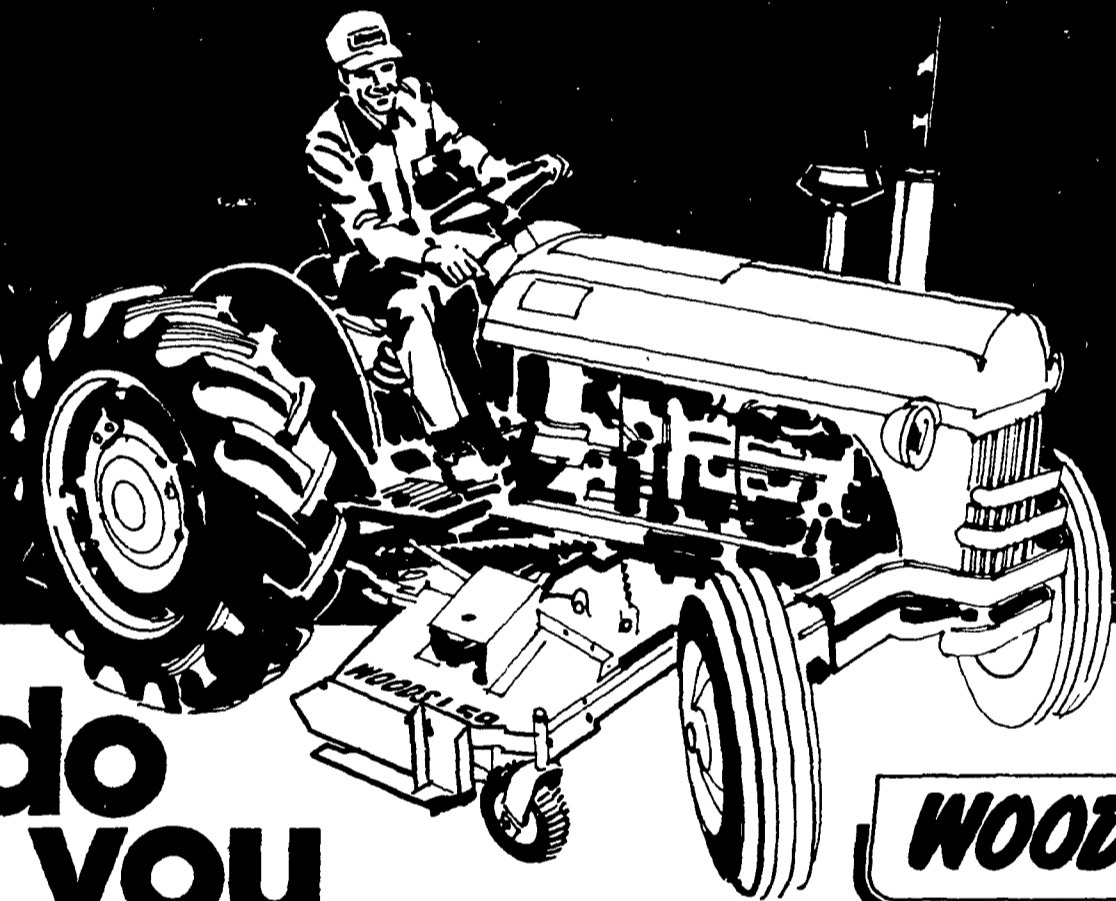
✓ Consider to what extent the animal can be "exposed" for possible merchandising through the industry. Will it be exhibited at many shows, or taken only to one roundup a year? Could it be included in an advertising program so that the individual or its future offspring are recognized by potential buyers?

✓ Carefully weigh the value of the sire against the maternal line. A heifer from an unknown sire, but with an outstanding dam may be worth more than one from a "hot" bull, but a dam with no records or a low classification type.

✓ Seek out the advice of leaders and established, successful breeders. But, remember: only one calf can win the top spot in any class.

"Simply, not all calves will wind up being show calves," Morris stressed. "But if an animal has a good, solid pedigree, she can still be the foundation of a valuable cow family. She might cost more initially than just a "good looker," but in the long run would probably be a better investment."

Lisa Bond, former Maryland national dairy winner, reminded 4-H members to check that a calf is eligible for registry and will be transferred before the project deadline. Failure to do so will make an animal ineligible for exhibition in the 4-H program.



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