

Herd Manager

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Kinsley Construction Company, for 15 years.

South Branch Farms began in the late '60s, when Kinsley first began purchasing land in the Seven Valleys area. The farm in-

cludes 1,200 owned and 200 rented acres. Livingston is joined by full-time herdsman Mike Welgosh, herdsman.

The majority of the acreage is in grass. "Traditionally we have grown our own grain crops, but his year we rented out the grain ground to deal exclusively with grass," said Livingston.

With the small amount of grain necessary to feed the cattle, Livingston figures it may be more cost effective to purchase, rather than to grow their own grain.

The farm is in the process of trimming back the herd to 200 brood cows to extend the grazing season a little more into winter, according to Livingston.

The Breeding Program
"We very much have a balanced breeding program," he said. "I would prefer that the cattle are average or slightly above average in every trait versus something that might be at the top of the herd in one or two traits but has other areas they might be weak in."

"The first hurdle they have to jump is having no health problems," he said. The cattle must be "functional and sound in their makeup, and be easy keeping cattle."

Livingston's words to live by in breeding season are that "you have whatever problems you put up with."

"If you're willing to keep open cows around, you're going to have infertility; if you keep sour dispositions around, you'll end up with cows with an attitude; if you start to pull calves, you're going to have calving problems," he said.

"If you have zero tolerance for these things, you'll find that it doesn't take too many generations before these problems virtually disappear. If a bad animal crops up, it will be one or two head versus a widespread problem."

Livingston estimates that he pulled six calves in the last year, with a calf crop from 200 cows. Most of the cows are 3-5 years old.

Extensive record-keeping is the cornerstone for making breeding and culling decisions at the farm. "Most of the cattle here probably have 30-40 different traits that we have them scored for in their lifetime," he said.

Record-keeping includes a calving score (one is unassisted, five is an abnormal presentation), and notes on a cow's mothering ability. Weaning weights are followed by yearling weights, at which time the calves are ultrasounded for carcass traits such as intramuscular fat and ribeye area. Records are used by the Angus Association to calculate Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs).

The fall breeding season is kept to a tight 45 days because "the window where we have really good dependable weather is smaller in the fall. We don't start until it really cools off, and we're done by the first of

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