

BLACK INK

Quality Pays ★ Since 1978

May 2018

Black Ink Column #11s

Photo option: <http://www.cabpartners.com/news/photos/heifers.jpg>

Keeping after it

By Miranda Reiman

“You’re a great mom!”

When people say that, I hope it’s true.

But sometimes the remark comes as I’ve just luckily (somehow) managed to get through church with relatively quiet, happy children for an entire service.

Sometimes strangers say that when we’re at a restaurant. They’re impressed we have six little people at the table, most eating and carrying on conversations like mini adults.

Still, I try not to get too confident. I know as quickly as all the things can go right, they can turn for the worse. Somebody gets bored. Somebody gets crabby. Somebody gets unruly. (And I’m not just talking about the kids.)

I know motherhood is not defined by slices in time, but rather how each of those add up. It’s about how you’ve interacted with your children all along. It’s about what you’re doing in the moments everybody sees and when nobody is looking at all. Every experience shapes their attitudes and characters.

Even if I’m a “good mom” today, if I don’t work at it, the classification could easily change. Those same kids could become spoiled brats by next year.

This isn’t a parenting column and maybe I’ve got motherhood on the brain because I just got back from maternity leave, but I’d say there are situations like this in the cattle business, too.

Think about your good cattle today. What do the buyers like about them?

They’re uniform. They gain and grade. They’ve got good attitudes.

You’ve probably focused on making them that way for several years, decades even.

When you have a goal you're working toward, a lot of the progress is made in the mundane, the everyday. It's in the breeding decisions and studying the sale books or AI catalogs. It's in the processing and weaning day logistics and execution.

But it's a journey. Having "good cattle" isn't a destination you reach—you have to keep after it.

Interviewing for a story earlier this year, I asked a veteran cattleman, "Do you think we maybe have enough quality in our cattle today that we can start selecting for something else?"

His answer was clear and direct.

"If you have a high heritability for a trait, you can take it out just as fast as you can put it in."

Marbling would be one of those traits. Docility may be another, especially when you figure in the environment moms provide.

It might not change as quickly as a toddler's attitude during a homily, but unless you keep a disciplined approach, you could turn around one day and find a different herd looking back at you.

Every decision adds up.

Next time in *Black Ink*[®], Nicole Lane Erceg will look at dealing with change. Questions? E-mail mreiman@certifiedangusbeef.com.

END