



Are your cows qualified?

By Miranda Reiman

Maybe you had to sum up your qualifications when you applied for an off-farm job. Perhaps your FFA Star Farmer application required it or, if you never actually had an “official” résumé, you’ve helped a son or daughter fill one out. A good résumé makes a positive difference.

The idea is to fit everything you want to say about yourself on one standard page and then hope the person reading it understands your value to the company, organization or community.

Have you ever thought about what you’d put on your herd’s résumé? What accomplishments and experiences could you convey that might help potential buyers understand their value?

Sure, your cattle aren’t slated for an interview any time soon, but they’re being scrutinized just as hard when they enter the sale ring. The outcome of this quick judgment can be the difference between your business ending up in the black or the red for the next fiscal year. A couple paragraphs of information to accompany the cattle into the ring might be the ticket to seeing more return on your investment in better genetics or management.

Following traditional résumé format, let’s start with goal or objective. Twenty-five years ago, your goal was to get a work release from school to spend a few afternoons shadowing the local feed salesman.

Your intentions with your feeder calves should be spelled out just as clearly. If you’re willing to retain part ownership or would like to get performance and carcass data back, let the buyers know. They may be more interested in your cattle if they know you’re interested in improving your herd. Individual identification (ID) or electronic, EID, may subtly reinforce these intentions.

Many high school students struggle to find enough experience to list on their résumés. Everything from baling hay for a neighbor to mowing the church lawn might make its way on the

list, but your cattle have acquired much experience in their time. Important notes include genetics, birthdates, vaccination strategies and preweaning management.

From the salebarn bleachers, anyone can see hide color and size. Buyers want the specifics. They want to know if the calves have had a particular implant, when they were weaned and on what ration. Data from Superior Livestock Auction in 2005 shows a premium of more than \$6 per hundredweight (cwt.) for the highest level of health preconditioning and 45-day weaning. Obviously, those are details worth communicating.

The “achievements” section of the résumé is a place where past successes show promise for the future. Being captain of the football team might illustrate your ability to lead. Outstanding FFA member proves your dedication; county beef ambassador shows your industry knowledge.

Your calves up for bid can benefit from proven performance in past years. Tracking gains and feed efficiencies, coupled with carcass data, can show others that your cattle are capable of great things. Some feedlots will share this information with you, regardless of whether you partner on the calves. Another option is to enroll a handful of calves in state feed-out program that will help you prove their ability.

Gathering some of these thoughts for the auctioneer to read before your cattle sell can help them garner salebarn premiums. If they’ve got the right résumé, buyers will likely see they’re the perfect choice to get the job done.

Next time in *Black Ink*, Steve Suther will look at herd improvement. Questions? Call toll-free at 877-241-0717 or e-mail mreiman@certifiedangusbeef.com.

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