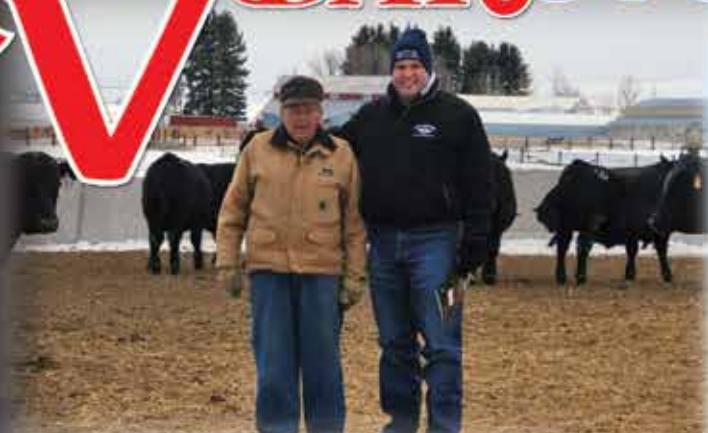


# VDAR STOCK REPORT



## No Substitute for Experience

By Dr. Aaron Arnett, Select Sires

It has been a long, cold winter and I now understand why so many retired folks spend their winters somewhere other than Ohio! Winter is still firmly in control at Select Sires with several inches of snow on the ground today. I traveled to more ranches in more states and put on more miles this sale season than any other in my first five years with Select Sires. In that process, I feel strongly that we acquired another tremendous set of bulls for the beef lineup, but like my friend Mark Gardiner always says, "We'll know in two years if they are any good!"

Of course bulls are just one side of this business, the other is people. I am privileged to interact with many of the great cattle breeders in my travels and I always learn something from each encounter. One of the most memorable happened just a few weeks ago **while visiting with Mr. Clarence VanDyke of Manhattan, MT**. Clarence is 82 years old and is just as quick and agile as most people 30

years his youth with a mind that is even sharper. During my visit to VDAR with Beef Specialist Jay Nansel, Clarence hopped in and out of the truck several times to walk through pens of bulls with us, to point out the dams of some of the best bulls and of course make sure we saw a favorite cow or two. He does not use a computer, any Facebook, Twitter or smart phone. He does keep a flip phone handy and stayed in contact with his wife during our visit to the ranch. One thing I learned from Clarence is there is absolutely nothing that can replace experience. No financial status, college degree, family name or job title can replace what Clarence VanDyke knows about Angus cattle. He is a marvel to spend time with and I so enjoyed soaking up his insight on a number of topics. His family puts tremendous pressure on the phenotypic keeping quality of the Angus female. They like moderate statured, deep bodied cows with excellent udders, good dispositions and fertility. We drove through the first calf cows and saw snug udders with small teats that looked like champion dairy cows. The cows were moderate in stature, extremely docile and in excellent body condition nursing healthy, vigorous calves. For a good lesson in cow sense and just life in general, the next time you are near Manhattan, Montana, be sure to pay a visit to Clarence VanDyke. If Montana is too far away, spend some time with anyone who has lived through decades of calving cows, drought, flood, too much government, low cattle prices and high feed prices. Hopefully the experience will be as valuable to you as visiting Clarence VanDyke was to me. It will definitely put life into proper perspective. Thank you, Clarence for your lifetime of experience in the cattle business and thank you for sharing some of it with me.

## Are We Going to Take the "Foot Structure" Problems Seriously?

*This is the first of a five-part series where we will be addressing the effects of making fertility your number one culling criteria and why its impact on your herd is the most effective thing you could do to improve your bottom line!*

### Effects on Fertility – Structural Soundness!

By Tom Wulff

It seems to me that the fact that foot structure problems in the Angus breed continues to be overlooked is a very critical issue. It could cost the breeders of Angus cattle untold market share if measures are not taken to restore confidence to our main customer, the commercial cattleman! My travels and conversations with customers and friends across the country lead me to believe that the "exodus" of the Angus bull buyer has already begun!

First, let's discuss the main structural issues that are the most prevalent and most damaging throughout the breed today.

#### 1. Shape: Primal Curl (also known as Claw Set or Crab Toe)

This problem appears to be rampant in our breed today, it is not always noticeable in young cattle and can go over looked until cattle are yearlings or older. This is a

front foot problem that, when extreme, can cause lameness and loss of production (exhibit A). When you study the foot at a young age, you can still see the beginnings of the problem by looking closely at the inside toe wall! From the hair line to the toe, the inside of the hoof will not be straight; it will be rounded off from top to bottom. Also, the outside of the hoof wall will actually start to curve inward underneath the foot! (Figure 1)

**Continued inside**

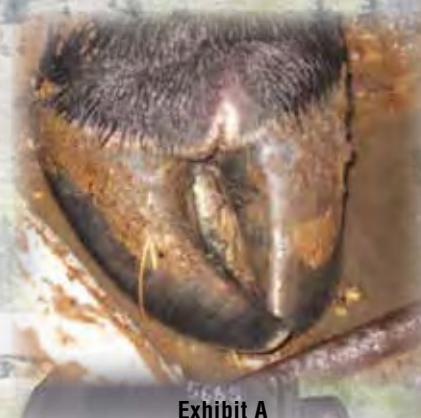


Exhibit A

Photo courtesy of F. David Kirkpatrick

# V D A R S T O C K R E P O R T

**OUR MISSION:** To provide breeding stock to our customers that will increase their profitability!  
 We demand that our cowherd calve in a 42 day calving season without exception. This one management strategy dictates that our cowherd become highly **UNIFORM, FERTILE & FUNCTIONAL!** All these factors allow for our customers to add significant **VALUE** to their programs!

*Continued from page 1...*

## Effects on Fertility – Structural Soundness!

### 2. Heel: Actually the “Lack of Heel”

This problem is predominantly a back foot issue and although it is not as big a problem as the Primal Curl, it is still very often seen in cattle around the countryside. When you study the back foot, you can look at the hairline on the back side of the back foot and look for the distance from that hairline to the ground. Ideally, we would like to see 1 ½ to 2+ inches of hoof, in some cases we see virtually none and with a hoof design that has very little heel, long toes and a structural breakdown is inevitable! (Figure 2)

It is frustrating to me as a breeder because it seems as if very little is being done to address the problem and that problem just seems to be getting bigger and bigger! Somebody has to take the lead on this issue or we can count on others stepping in to take our place as the King of the hill.

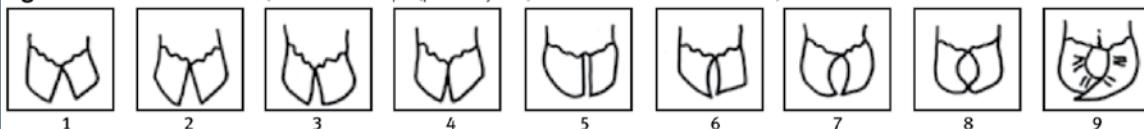
that breeders could use to establish an EPD that can lead to help in the culling process. The Australians have done a fairly good job with their structural EPD component. The Holstein breed has also done a very good job with structural issues because they have gone to the extent of sending out trained evaluators that are taught the same standard to score the cattle.

My biggest fear always comes back to the commercial industry and our main customer, the commercial cow calf producer. It is a simple problem for them, if they have to cull more and more cattle for structural breakdowns, they are going to change where they buy their breeding stock. Duane Martin Jr., along with his father, Duane Martin Sr., are among the largest cow/calf producers in America and have been loyal Angus bull buyers for more than 20 years. Needless to say it is very disturbing when a commercial producer of that magnitude tells you that they are going to have to start looking at other breeds because for the first time ever, they are

now culling 2-3 year old cows for Crab Toes and no Heel!

Duane Martin, Jr. stated, “I have heard some people say that the cattle are being fed so much harder today and that is why we are seeing so many more feet problems; well, my heifers never see an ounce of grain or even a flake of hay and all of a sudden I have to cull more and more cattle for these

**Fig. 1: Front Feet Claw Set** (Reference: Shape (primarily curl) and evenness of the claw set.)



1 – open divergent; 5 – good; 9 – extreme scissor claw

**Fig. 2: Front feet angle and rear feet angle** (Reference: Strength of pastern, depth of heel and length of foot.)



1 – steep (stubbie toe); 5 – good; 9 – shallow heel

Diagram courtesy of F. David Kirkpatrick

Beef Genetics Extension Specialist, Matt Spangler, from the University of Nebraska, believes that “It is a huge problem for the Angus breed and that someone needs to take the lead in this area or the Angus breed risks losing credibility with its customers.” Although Spangler recognizes that environment plays a role and the fact that many Angus breeders think they are in a feeding contest, there is definitely a genetic component and that is where the biggest improvement can potentially be made. “It is a difficult problem to solve.” Spangler continued, “The challenge of accumulating accurate, comprehensive data and information is the biggest hurdle. There are no standardized guidelines for breeders to go by and, frankly, many people just do not pay close attention to structure unless there is a problem.”

Spangler believes that a place to start would be for the Angus Association to put out a set of Standardized Guidelines

structure problems?” He continued, “It certainly isn’t the feeding that is causing the problems for us! It is my observation that the narrow, light muscled cattle are the ones we usually have to cull for structure problems. I am fed up with the Angus breed’s focus on carcass and low birth weight, while totally ignoring foot and leg structure and fleshing ability,” explained Martin.

Over the years, the Martins have literally fed thousands of their own cattle and they are bewildered that the breed is so focused on marbling. Martin shared, “With the cost of feed today, any and all premiums can be eaten up faster than you can blink an eye, without question the MOST important factor in being profitable feeding cattle revolves around the performance and efficiency of the cattle you are feeding. We need cattle that are heavy muscled and wide structured, cattle with a big correct foot that will effectively travel tough country and convert grass into protein.”

*Continued on back page*



**VDAR Right Kind 8252**, Reg # 17362014. a 1/9/12 son of VDAR Really Windy 4097, purchased by Greg Lucht, Manhattan Mont. and Genex, Billings Mont. **Semen available through Genex, Billings Mont.**



**VDAR Wind Break 7062**, Reg # 17280620 a 1/8/12 son of Really Windy 4097, purchased by ABS Global, Billings Mont. **Semen available through ABS Global, Billings Mont.**



**VDAR Really Windy 7082**, Reg # 17280621 a 1/8/12 son of Really Windy 4097, purchased by Claybrook Farms & Hay Wire Angus, Covington, Tenn. **Semen available through Claybrook Farms, Covington, Tenn. or Van Dyke Angus Ranch.**



**VDAR Royal Duke 7342**, Reg # 17280633 a 1/21/12 son of VDAR Royal Duke 4047, purchased by Lunds B Bar Angus, Wibaux Mont. **Semen available through Steve Lund, Wibaux Mont. or Van Dyke Angus Ranch.**



**VDAR Black Cedar 8582**, Reg # 17358815 a 1/26/12 son of VDAR Black Cedar 8380, purchased by Burgess Angus Ranch, Homedale Idaho. **Semen available through Doug Burgess, Homedale, Idaho or Van Dyke Angus Ranch.**



**VDAR Four Corners 8232**, Reg # 17362012 a 1/8/12 son of DFA Hero 6017, purchased by Dietz Family Angus, Sentinel Butte, North Dakota. **Semen available through Kevin Dietz, Sentinel Butte, NoDak. or Van Dyke Angus Ranch.**



**VDAR Wind Swept 8002**, Reg # 17361993 a 12/26/11 son of VDAR Really Windy 4097, purchased by Select Sires, Plain City Ohio. **Semen available through Select Sires, Plain City, Ohio.**



**VDAR Hero 7072**, Reg # 17290683 a 1/8/12 son of VDAR Hero 6017, purchased by Bailey Patterson, Spearman Texas. **Semen Available through Bailey Patterson, Spearman, Tex. or Van Dyke Angus Ranch.**

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support in making  
our 2013 bull sale  
a great success!*

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## OUR MISSION:

*Provide Breeding Stock that Increases Your Profitability*



# V D A R S T O C K R E P O R T — June 2013

*Continued from inside*

He continued, "These are the same cattle that will be the most efficient in the feed yard as well and the cattle that make the whole industry more money!" The problem is, as Martin concluded, "we are having a much harder time finding the ones we need!"

You may wonder how we plan on bringing this in-depth discussion about structure back around to our topic of Fertility. Well, it is pretty simple when you get right down to it; 15 years ago when Van Dyke Angus Ranch implemented our 42-day calving season, we had some cattle with, let's say, less than perfect structure. Those were the first ones to find their way to the auction barn! It really makes perfect sense...if cattle are in pain because their feet hurt all the time, if they cannot travel well enough to forage and stay in good condition, they will fail when placed under an intensified fertility regimen! While we manage our cattle very closely and always spare little time or expense to make sure that we get the absolute most out of the genetics we are producing, a hoof trimmer is never part of the equation.

When making genetic decisions and selections for your cowherd, I believe there is never a replacement for spending the time and money to travel around and find cattle that are sound. Go look at sons and daughters and as many related genetics as you can, but after that is done, go home and make your cowherd fit into a tight calving window and you will soon see that the structural problems will eliminate themselves in a short period of time!

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**125 Angus Cows**  
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