

# Breeding for better net returns

**H**is herd may not be the best-known Angus bull operation in the country but Silas Chapman of Chapman Cattle Company near Stettler aims for a solid reputation as a supplier of good, low-maintenance cattle.

The Chapman name has a long history in registered seedstock. Starting in the mid-50s, under the Atomdale prefix, Bill Chapman was the premier exporter of Hereford genetics to Europe.

Bill's son, Blake Chapman, increased the herd's presence in the show ring, leading to more private sales and, in the late '70s, to the first export of a Hereford bull to New Zealand. Eventually, Blake's KCC prefix became the largest source of Line One genetics in Canada.

Soon after Bill's grandson, Silas, joined the operation in 1993, the family purchased their first Angus cattle as embryos from the OH Ranch in 1993.

"It was time for a change and the Red Angus breed was really just starting to come into its own," says Chapman. "And, Red Angus fit well with the strong Charolais and Simmental influence in this area."

Chapmans acquired their first blacks from the Kluzak dispersal in 1998. Today, Chapman Cattle Company has 330 purebred Angus and Red Angus cows and 170 commercial Angus cows.

"Our herd really moved forward genetically with the acquisition of the mature cows from the Tom Walling herd that Dallas Jensen of Crowfoot Cattle Company had brought up from Winifred, Montana," says Chapman. "We contract grazed these cows for Dallas during the drought of '02 and were so impressed by their productivity we bought them. They weren't the biggest-framed animals, but the weight was there and they had all the positive and consistent traits we wanted. Those cows are the foundation of the herd Crowfoot successfully dispersed in 2006."



Chapmans rarely use a sire unless they've seen the bull, his sire, and his dam.

Chapmans use rotational grazing despite being at the edge of the crop-growing region. Blake cross-fenced all 3,500 acres into 20- to 40-acre paddocks using one high-tensile wire. They buy hay locally.

"It has really worked," says Silas. "The carrying capacity has significantly increased and the overall health and biodiversity of our pastures has improved. And, the cattle are healthier with higher weight gains."

Calving starts the third week of April and starts to wrap around May 20th. About 50 cows will calve in late January.

"Our calving issues are minimal," says Chapman. "Calving ease is genetic, but with later calving, less blood concentrates around the visceral organs, lowering birthweight and reducing problems. Pounds weaned per cow exposed is key to profits, but it all starts with a live calf."

Most of the herd is AI-bred for one cycle, starting July 15th. Conception rates average 85%.

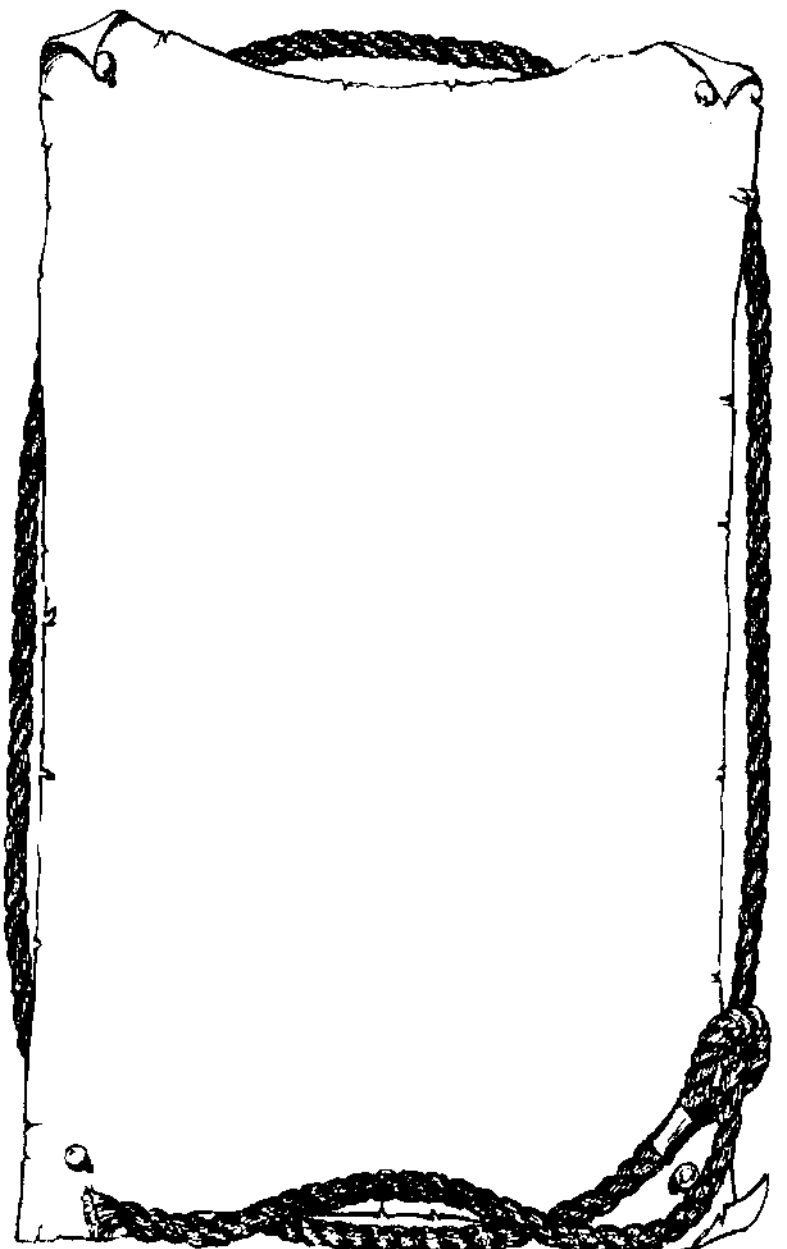


Chapmans don't use a high-roughage diet. Their bulls are 100% forage-raised and forage-tested.

"Late spring calving means the cows flush on green grass are in excellent body condition to re-breed," says Chapman. "We basically live with the cows for those 21 days – that three weeks is where it all starts for the following season."

Chapmans rarely use a sire unless they've seen the bull, his sire, and his dam. Ideally, they'd use only sons from elite cows within their herd – the best adapted to their environment. This year they used six sons of original Walling dams.

They outsource genetics that complement their program, from the Ohlde, Sitz, Diamond D, Crowfoot, and Sinclair herds. They also religiously study other herds.



## 2nd Annual Chapman Cattle Company

### 100% FORAGE RAISED RED AND BLACK ANGUS 2 YEAR OLD BULL SALE

For more information or to receive a catalog contact  
403-742-6297 Silas Chapman  
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The Chapman Advantage ...

*3rd Generation Seedstock supplier  
Affordable Angus Genetics  
"Real Cattle for Real Cattlemen"*

# 2008

February 14th  
Stettler Auction Mart, 1:00pm  
Updated bull information and catalog available at:  
[www.chapmancattle.com](http://www.chapmancattle.com)



*In order to have some control over cost of production Chapman Cattle Company aims for efficient, low maintenance cows that wean big calves without losing fertility.*

The cowherd is the bred-and-butter of any purebred or commercial operation a strong cow herd should be able to produce sons good enough to use back in the herd.

"We want length, but not tall skinnies. We believe efficiency has more to do with profit than any other trait, so

we select for a frame five animal. Our cattle won't be the biggest framed cattle, but we're dedicated to shifting the paradigm of assessing cattle productivity."

All the cattle are raised entirely on forage. Chapman believes this enhances the staying power and fertility of bulls.

"We don't use a high-roughage diet, we've gone a step further," he says. "Our bulls are 100% forage-raised and forage-tested.

"We can't influence the price of our calves in fall, but we have some control over our cost of production. We aim for efficient, low maintenance



*"Ultimately the cowherd is the bred-and-butter of any purebred or commercial operation of any breed. And, a strong cowherd should be able to produce sons good enough to use back in the herd."*

cows that wean big calves without losing fertility.

Chapmans' weaning weights average around 600 lbs with little variance and all calves are backgrounded, but Chapmans keep yearling weight ratios to compare within the group. Only the top 40% of bull calves make it to

the sale.

After selling with Crowfoot Cattle Company and Happyvale Angus of Stettler Chapmans held their first annual bulls sale in February 2007. They sold bulls across western Canada to customers with 50 to 1500 cows.

by Helen McMenamin