

## Raising herd standards, performance with GeneSTAR MVPs

Nestled in the mountainsides of Western Montana you can find one of the country's leading Charolais herds. These cattle, owned by Chuck and Doris Stipe of Moise, Montana, represent more than five years of genetic advancements through the use of GeneSTAR® technology.

Home to around 1,000 Charolais and more than 200 Angus cattle, the Stipe family has been a true believer in "performance with no sacrifice in carcass quality or calving ease" since its beginnings more than 35 years ago. To continually promote this philosophy the Stipe family has searched for new tools to provide the most accurate information to their customers. Five years ago this led them to test animals with GeneSTAR technology, augmenting performance information.

Chuck has taken the latest in DNA-marker technology and paired it with performance testing to gain the most information about each bull and replacement female with the ultimate goal of improving herd performance.

"When DNA technology came along five years ago we were really receptive to it," says Chuck. "Our clients have appreciated the fact that they have this additional information. We're really confident the technology is going to do the industry a lot of good."

### Successful bull sales

Stipe Charolais hosts an annual bull sale and sells 200 to 300 home-raised bulls to Charolais enthusiasts and commercial cow/calf producers from throughout the country. In the sale catalog Chuck includes GeneSTAR

information, as well as educational materials to help buyers understand genomic technology.

The 2009 sale featured a full lineup of bulls tested with GeneSTAR MVPs™, including the bull ranking first in the breed for tenderness. Because of this high MVP tenderness rating, the bull sold for a premium price of \$10,500, topping the entire Charolais sale.

"The MVP information provides our buyers with an added comfort level and shows we are willing to go the extra mile to provide the most accurate information about our bulls," says Chuck. "We've had customers tell us that they appreciate the information and that they can see a difference in sale prices based on the DNA results."

### A new way of selecting cattle

All animals at Stipe Charolais are tested for GeneSTAR MVPs at around one year of age. Chuck tests all of the females and bulls in his herd to make more rapid genetic improvement, using the information as an important part of his selection process for animals entering the herd. All of the bulls featured in the Stipe Charolais annual bull sale are tested for MVPs prior to the sale.

"Recently, I sorted a group of females like we did 30 years ago, based on individual animal phenotypes and information we knew about their pedigree. We were then able to DNA test the heifers to determine which would be the best replacements. It's a whole new way of selecting individual animals."



CHUCK STIPE, STIPE CHAROLAIS

### Stars to MVPs ... and beyond

Even as more information becomes available through GeneSTAR MVPs, Chuck realizes the impact the new reporting system has already had on his operation, and the importance it will have for the future of genomic technology.

"I like MVPs, especially because of the scoring system and information about ranking within the breed. A commercial rancher buying bulls can look at these scores and know immediately what he's looking at and what the information means."

As for the future of genomics, Chuck believes the possibilities are endless and ranchers will gain more information about individual animals to produce a more uniform product.

"I think we're going to raise the standard of beef quality and get a better handle on cost of production," says Chuck. "We have too much variability in the product we produce today within our industry, and I think DNA will be part of the answer."