Five Good Reasons to Use Artificial Insemination in 2020

The use of artificial insemination has been growing in the Red Angus breed. A decade ago, just over 30% of all calves recorded in the RAAA database were sired by artificial insemination or embryo transfer. By 2019, that figure reached 42.4% (see table below).

There are many good reasons why Red Angus breeders are increasing A.I. use. Provided below are five of those reasons, with a brief explanation of each.

1. **More calves born early in the calving season.** The combination of estrus synchronization and A.I. has been shown to significantly increase the percentage of calves born early in the calving season. This provides obvious benefits for commercial producers (more time for heifers/cows to breed back and heavier calves to sell at weaning), but it is equally advantageous for registered breeders. More calves born early means more age-advantaged bulls on sale day. Additionally, older replacement heifers, that have more time to grow, start cycling before their first breeding season. Early born heifers tend to breed up better than their later-born counter parts, and often stay in the herd longer as cows.

2. **Unlimited sire selection options.** Semen is available on literally hundreds of Red Angus sires today – more in number and kind than ever before. Some are young and promising, others are older and proven. They come with a wide variety of EPD profiles and phenotypic attributes. No matter what you're looking for to take your herd to the next level, the odds are good you'll find it among the large number of bulls offered by semen companies big and small, or, in some cases, from individual breeders.

3. **Name recognition is increased.** Many A.I. sires enjoy positive "name recognition" among Red Angus breeders and with commercial ranchers. When you produce a calf from one of these sires, the marketability of that calf is usually enhanced as a result. Red Angus bull price data collected in recent years by the RAAA marketing staff has demonstrated that, on average, A.I.-sired bulls outsell those resulting from natural service by more than $500 per head. We might call this the "halo effect" of A.I., although there are other factors involved in this price difference as well.

4. **Connect your herd to the Red Angus database.** The use of A.I. sires is an excellent way to genetically link an individual herd to the entire Red Angus population. When contemporary groups contain calves by heavily used A.I. sires along with your own pasture sires, the genetic evaluation is supplied with more informative data to determine the relative rankings of your genetics in the context of the entire breed. More accurate EPDs for your cattle is the result. Years ago, genetics experts encouraged breeders to use high-accuracy reference sires as part of their breeding programs for this very purpose – to create strong linkages between their herds and the entire breed database. A.I. sires can favorably fulfill that role today.

5. **Become a better reproduction manager.** Most everyone that actively uses A.I. will agree that doing so made them better at managing reproduction in their own herds. To be successful at A.I., cowherd managers must pay close attention to health, nutrition, mineral supplementation, body condition, cyclicity and a host of other factors. There is a lot to learn when starting an A.I. program from scratch. Even though it takes work and time to put all the pieces together for a successful breeding season, the result is more knowledge and expertise that often leads to improved reproduction success across the entire cowherd.

By Tom Brink, RAAA CEO

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Red Angus

Red Angus A.I. and ET Calves: Percentage of All Recorded Animals			
Calf Birth Year	A.I-Sired Calves	Embryo Transfer Calves	Total A.I-Sired & ET Calves
2010-2012 Avg.	26.1%	4.8%	30.8%
2013	27.8%	4.7%	32.5%
2014	28.1%	5.2%	33.3%
2015	30.1%	5.3%	35.4%
2016	31.4%	6.6%	38.0%
2017	32.6%	7.2%	39.9%
2018	33.3%	6.8%	40.1%
2019	36.3%	6.1%	42.4%