



# SOUTH POLL NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2010

## *It's in the Genes...*

By SPGCA President  
Teddy Gentry

Buying a bull only for his looks, and without checking his family tree, doesn't make much sense.



After all, as cow/calf producers we are all seeking good economic traits.

Fertility and longevity are still the most important traits to look for. Next would have to come efficiency or cow size as measured in profit per acre.

After picking out a bull, the buyer should check out his mother, grandmother, siblings and his sire's dam, if possible. Consider mature cow size (800 to 1,100 pounds), udder and teat quality and score their hair coat. Will they be in tune with their environment?

And of course no matter how good the bull looks as an individual, does he carry the concentration of genes it takes to breed consistent quality in his calves? (Is he linebred?)

So when it comes to buying a bull whose daughters will become the cows of your farm's future, don't get caught up in the performance game. Excess growth is a feedlot trait that leads to the destruction of a cow herd. Remember when you're looking to buy a bull, beauty is only skin deep. A cow/calf producer that wishes to have a great cow herd, and not just a great set of numbers, will have to dig a little deeper.

May the profits be with you.

Teddy Gentry

## Why choose South Polls?

by Dave Roberts

Hello, I'm Dave Roberts of Ft. Payne, Ala.; formerly from Illinois. I was raised in the Hereford and Polled Hereford business. I also raised some Angus cattle along the way, dealt in crossbred and purebred show steers, and managed a large purebred Polled Hereford operation for many years, but as sometimes happens the owners passed away and that chapter of my life came to an end. Shortly after that I was called up by an acquaintance to see if I was interested in moving to Alabama to work for Bent Tree Farms owned by Teddy Gentry. I said I would come and look around, but I already had a good offer from a place in north Texas.

I arrived in Alabama in May, 1998, toured the farm and had a chance to meet Teddy Gentry. I was inspired. Teddy had



Dave Roberts

ideas outside the box. He was trying to do things different from most purebred

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## SPGCA Annual Meeting

The second South Poll Grass Cattle Association annual meeting and field day will be held on Saturday, May 8, at the ranch of Tom and Toyah McGrady in Montgomery, Texas.

Activities will kick off at 9 a.m. with Tom McGrady welcoming and introducing attendees to his ranch and explaining the activities the association has planned for the day.

Greg Judy, author and Holistic high density grazing rancher will give an overview of his high density grazing operation. South African Holistic rancher Ian Mitchell-Innes will be covering the benefits of Holistic Management on our ranches. Both men will lead a pasture walk in the afternoon.

Dr. Jim Sanders will speak on what it takes to build a profitable and enjoyable cowherd.

Association President Teddy Gentry will give an overview on the makeup and purpose of South Poll cows. Gentry is the founder of the four-way cross, which includes Hereford, Angus, Senepol and Barzona breeds of cattle.

Gentry says the field day will be an opportunity to learn about progressive grazing methods and to see South Poll cattle as they fit into the efficient production of quality grass-fed beef. He describes South Poll cows as a "gentle, higher productive mama cow that is heat tolerant without having a Bos-indicus base."

Ranch owners Tom and Toyah McGrady say they would like to showcase South Poll cattle at the field day and intend to have a representation of cattle from all component breeds so attendees can get a better idea of how the South Poll came to be and what each of the four component breeds had to offer in the makeup of the South Poll.

A few select open heifers, bred heifers, cows and a few slick bulls will be offered at a Cowboy auction to be held at 1 p.m.

The organization will sponsor a silent auction throughout the day that would include semen on some of the best South Poll bulls in the breed and many other interesting items. Semen will also be sold during the day so bring your tank.

A lunch of grassfed South Poll beef will be served at noon. McGrady says the day's activities should end at about 4:15 p.m.

Pre-registration for the annual meeting will be needed, with a \$50 per person fee being charged by the association for entrance to all the activities. Youngsters from 16 and under will be admitted free. Anyone registering after April 15 will be charged a \$75 fee. To register online go to [www.southpoll.com](http://www.southpoll.com) under downloads or contact Lisa Sanders at 256-845-6851.

Registration forms and fees may be mailed to South Poll Grass Cattle Association, c/o Lisa Sanders, P.O. Box 681123, Fort Payne, AL 35968.

Executive board members of the association will hold their annual meeting on Friday afternoon at the ranch.

Join the  
South Poll  
Grass Cattle  
Association  
today!

Contact  
Lisa Sanders  
at

South Poll  
Grass Cattle  
Association

P. O. Box   
Fort Payne, AL

breeders by producing cattle that were more adaptable and efficient for their environment.

I had never seen a South Poll until that day. For those of you who do not know, the South Poll is a composite breed that is 1/4 Hereford, 1/4 Angus, 1/4 Barzona, and 1/4 Senepol. No they didn't originate in the Garden of Eden, nor did any other breed. I had heard about Barzonas and Senepols, but had never seen any until that day in 1998. They add a lot to the South Poll breed. The Barzonas are very hardy, heat tolerant, have good udders and live a long time. One of the old Barzona cows a lot of the South Polls go back to lived to be 26. The South Poll breed is extremely heat tolerant, milk well, put a good shape in a rib eye, and do extremely well in the hot summer months.

I know about the Hereford and Angus. Teddy explained he used them in the mix, because the Herefords were very docile and had great foraging ability and could adapt about anywhere. The Angus were noted for their carcass traits and mothering ability.

What I like about the South Poll breed, is that combing these four other breeds of cattle created a cow that is very balanced; is efficient on grass, very fertile; produces a very nice tender carcass; and is very problem free. Problem free might be the most important point in my opinion. Compared to other cattle I've been around, they have fewer calving problems, less pink-eye, fewer prolapses, fewer fertility problems, more calf vigor and fewer fly problems. If you don't think so, run them with another breed, and count the flies on each animal on a hot humid day. These are all economic traits that can't always be measured by EPDs.

I need to start over a little bit. I took the job at Bent Tree back in 1998. I was excited when I got to calve out the first set of full blood South Poll heifers I had been around. They all calved unassisted; the calves got up and nursed and were running around in no time.

The South Poll breed started out from a pretty humble



Dave Roberts is shown here with some recently-weaned South Poll heifers.

beginning; from an idea to reality. In a few short years South Poll bred calves have spread from Ft. Payne, Ala., to 20 some states and three South American countries.

I get questions all the time about South Polls.

**1. What about their carcass traits?**

**Answer:** The last load of steers Bent Tree fed out graded 96% choice and prime

**2. What about gain?**

**Answer:** A pot load of South Poll steers in a feedlot situation gained 4.89 lbs/day, setting a record for the feeder who feeds thousands per year. In a grazing situation a grazer reported a pot load of South Poll steers out performed any cattle he had dealt with.

**3. What about fertility?**

**Answer:** Ask someone like Bill Bond in Texas. The heifers he kept for replacements all settled, and of the heifers he sold, all but one settled first service A.I.

As a side note, I've never known of a grass-raised South Poll bull to not be fertile. If I'm wrong please let me know

**4. What about their docility?**

**Answer:** Why not ask my old friend and neighbor Jon Bell from Plymouth, Ill. I've been dealing with Jon for more years than I like to count. He's been buying bulls from Bent Tree since I've been here. He told me he

wished he'd had South Poll bulls 25 years ago; he was finally producing cattle that were easy to handle.

**5. What about adaptability?**

**Answer:** South Polls were bred to be the Southern Mama Cow, but have thrived and survived from Florida to Minnesota and from the Car-

olinas to California. So far, none in Alaska.

In summary one of the most important things about the South Poll breed is the people who have become involved as breeders. They have become great friends and are true stewards of their land, grass and cattle.

**2nd Annual  
South Poll Grass Cattle Association  
Meeting & Field Day**

**May 8, 2010**

**Hosted by Tom & Toyah McGrady,  
Montgomery, Texas**

**On The Farm – On Grass**

**Registration \$50 - \$75 after April 15**

**Guest Speakers**

**Ian Mitchell Innes • Greg Judy  
Jim Sanders, Ph. D.**

**McGrady Ranch**

**3920 Spring Branch Road,  
Montgomery, TX 77356**

**For More Information Call Lisa Sanders  
256-845-6851**

**If you have information you would like to share in upcoming issues of the newsletter, please submit information to or contact:**

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