

Duane Hilyard, Iowa—

“You have the whole ball of wax handed to you when you purchase Goldrush Genetics,” states Duane Hilyard of Cumberland, Iowa. “It’s like having the farm handed to you. The farm ground’s been paid for, the fields have been fertilized and planted and the tough work is complete. You only have to harvest and get in that great crop.”

Duane knows this from experience as he’s been a Goldrush Genetics bull buyer for more than 10 years.

But the first time this Iowa commercial cowman purchased a Goldrush Genetics bull wasn’t for himself. It was for a neighbor.

Duane says he and a neighbor had been to a bull sale in Nebraska and were still one bull shy of their needs. They shared this information with a guy they had just met, and he suggested checking out Goldrush Genetics bulls. Since Mike Hynek’s ranch was on their way, they did just that.

“I went through what was left of Mike’s private treaty bulls, and there were only three left,” Duane tells. “But all three bulls were excellent bulls. I remember thinking that if these three remaining bulls were that good, what were the top end like—the ones that had already been sold and were gone from the pen.”

Rather than jump into action and buy a Goldrush Genetics bull the very next year, Duane waited patiently to see how the neighbor’s Goldrush Genetics-sired calves turned out.

“That did it for me,” Duane says. “After seeing what the neighbor’s calves were doing, I knew it was time to rethink my program. I realized I needed to get bulls from Mike.”

Having met Mike and being impressed with his cattle knowledge and program, Duane opted to not drive to Guide Rock, Neb. Instead he used Mike’s Sight Unseen Program—and he and his two neighbors have been using the SUS program ever since.

“The first and only bull my neighbors and I ever looked at before buying was that first bull,” Duane explains. “After that we simply called Mike up, described what we needed bull-wise and bought bulls.

“Out of the nine or 10 bulls we’ve purchased, we’ve been happy with each.”

Duane adds that the Goldrush Genetics motto of delivering more than is charged is true.

“I can’t say enough about my Goldrush Genetics bulls,” Duane states. “I like to keep ahead of the tribe and produce high-quality calves that work from start to finish. You know the kind. Calves that arrive problem-free, explode with growth, make me money when I sell at weaning and keep the feedyard and packer happy by making them money.

“That’s the kind of calves produced when you use Goldrush Genetics genetics.”

Loves Balancers

Duane’s commercial cowherd is comprised of Angus and Balancers (Angus X Gelbvieh). And he’s working to get more Balancers into the herd by keeping his top-end replacement heifers.

“Balancers are truly wonderful animals,” he states. “In my opinion, the industry’s two best breeds make up Balancers. The breed complementarity is super.

“My Balancer cows are great mothers. I have the black hide that I like and all the traits my program wants and needs.”

Duane describes his ideal cow as a Balancer that weighs 1,200 to 1,250 pounds, is square butted, thick made and has a great udder. She weans off a 650-pound calf, cycles and breeds back each year and has lots of style.

Style plays a key role in his herd.

“Style makes a difference as people have to like what they see in an animal,” Duane states. “I sell cattle as feeder cattle, and style coupled with pounds brings more premium.”

This Iowa commercial cowman praises Goldrush Genetics for producing stylish, eye-appealing animals. He says he knows every bull that comes from Goldrush Genetics will be structurally correct and stylish.

Another trait where Goldrush Genetics shine, Duane says, is “what’s under the hide.”

“What’s underneath the hide is important too, and I get that with Mike’s cattle,” Duane states. “Mike has excellent genetics from start to finish. Just take a look at all of his carcass information he has from DNA testing.

“Having that carcass information available on my bull purchases makes a big difference. It’s another tool I rely on in addition to appraising a bull visually, knowing his pedigree and having his performance information.”

Duane is quick to point out that he won’t purchase a bull nowadays without having carcass information on the animal.

“Sure I get paid at weaning because that’s when I sell my calves, but I like to sell more than what I get paid for,” he states. “I want the next segments of the beef industry to like my calves too. That means the feedyard and the packer must also be happy with my calves.

“When the feedyard guy and the packer like my calves, my buyers will return. I’ve seen too many commercial guys lose demand for their calves because their cattle won’t perform on the rail. When that happens, the buyers and the dollars aren’t there the next year or the following year. Word gets out when cattle work on the rail and when they don’t.”

Although Duane says he’s tried to get the carcass data on his calves, the feedyard and packer have been reluctant to share such. He says they keep telling him that his knowing this would hurt them in the long run. They want to buy his calves as cheap as they can and, if others knew how his calves performed, a bidding war would lead to higher prices they would need to pay.

Duane says he understands.

“But I know those calves are performing on the rail or the buyers wouldn’t be back wanting them,” he states.

Duane’s steer calves are not the only calves in demand when he sells at the local livestock auction. The calves from his two neighbors who use Goldrush Genetics bulls are in demand as well.

Then, too, Duane’s Goldrush Genetics-sired heifers have a ready audience as well. The same feedyard buyer has purchased his heifer calves for three years straight. But he doesn’t get these heifers cheap, as area commercial cowmen want the heifers for their herds—to use them as replacements.

“These are my leftovers or seconds,” Duane tells. “I keep the top-end replacements for my own herd. These are the heifers that didn’t make the cut. Yet several of my commercial cowmen want to make these heifers into cows.

“I think I’m fortunate as this feedyard buyer won’t let the heifers go. That speaks volumes about the quality of the offspring of Goldrush Genetics sires. Even my seconds are wanted as replacement heifers. Wow!”

To say that this Iowa cowman is a big fan of Mike Hynek and Goldrush Genetics would be an understatement. And rightfully so. After all, Duane is upfront and acknowledges that his program wouldn’t be where it is today if it weren’t for Goldrush Genetics.

“Mike has done a knock-out job. He is such an honest person—in his business dealings and in his program—and he’s gone above and beyond to get his program where he is,” Duane states.

“Mike’s Nov. 1 dispersal will be a sad day in the cattle industry as the industry will be losing one great guy and a highly progressive program. I know not having Goldrush Genetics in business is going to put a hole in my program. He’s been my No. 1 bull source for years.”