

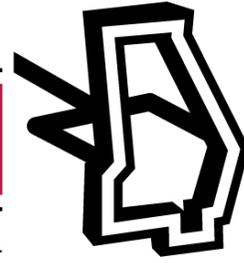
# GEORGIA

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# HERD PROGRAM

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Tifton • Calhoun



## Organizational Document

### HISTORY:

The Georgia Heifer Evaluation and Reproductive Development (HERD) program was developed by a group of County Extension Agents in 1998. They created the program and now provide leadership as well as the labor on days where heifers are being bred, measured and evaluated. Their insight is notable because no similar development and evaluation program existed in the Southeast previously. Serving as a successful model, the HERD program was the driving force for many cattle producers to enhance the reproductive efficiency and value of their heifer calves, both commercial and registered, which otherwise were discounted when compared to steer herd mates.

The first group of heifers was received at the Irwinville station in 1998, and the resulting group of bred heifers was sold in April of 1999. In 2000, the first group of heifers was received in Calhoun, with a sale occurring in May of 2001. Since then, the program has continued to flourish with the development of fall-born heifers in Irwinville and winter-born heifers in Calhoun. Starting in 2005, producers that consign their heifers were invited to participate in the annual steering committee meeting of the program.

**PURPOSE/MISSION:** The Georgia Heifer Evaluation and Reproductive Development (HERD) Program is designed to address the following objectives:

1. To provide an educational resource that exposes the beef industry in Georgia to management techniques associated with development of beef heifers and serve as a model incorporating the latest research-based technology that can improve the reproductive success of Georgia and Southeastern cattle producers.
2. To provide beef cattle producers with unique information about their herd for decision making and management purposes.
3. Demonstrate feeding and health programs that result in replacement heifers reaching target weights required for successful breeding performance to enhance lifetime productivity in the beef herd.
4. To provide a method of evaluating heifers including reproductive performance, reproductive traits, and disposition.
5. Develop heifers which are source identified and genetically verified.
6. Demonstrate the benefits of cooperative efforts involving cattle producers, animal health professionals, Georgia County Extension Agents, the UGA Animal and Dairy Science Department, the UGA Diagnostic Lab and College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Georgia Cattlemen's Association.

**LOCATIONS:** The HERD Program is conducted at two locations each year. These include:

1. **Tifton** (Irwinville) – Fall-born heifers
  - Birth Dates: September 1 to November 30 (prior year)
  - Entry Deadline: September 1
  - Delivery: First week of October
  - Sale: Mid-April of subsequent year
2. **Calhoun** – Winter-born heifers
  - Birth Dates: December 1 to February 28 (prior year)
  - Entry Deadline: November 1
  - Delivery: First week of December
  - Sale: Late May or early June of subsequent year

**HERD TEAM:** The HERD Team is comprised of following parties:

- **Sponsors/Individuals and Responsibilities**
  - *County Extension Agents:*
    - The County Agents are present on heifer workdays and sale days to provide oversight and carry out duties associated with animal handling and data collection. An Agent Coordinator will be elected each year at each location. These individuals will work with UGA personnel to ensure enough agents are present at each workday and coordinate other activities that include the agents on the HERD Team.
    - Agents will promote the programs to potential Consignors in their respective areas. This can serve as an avenue to educate producers on the benefits of developing heifers as replacements to improve their value in the herd, as well as their market value. Furthermore, county agents will promote the annual sales in their areas.
    - Attend the steering meetings to provide feedback and vote on rules and regulation changes.
  - *Consignors:*
    - Provide high quality heifers that meet all eligibility requirements.
    - Help promote the program and heifers to producers in their area.
    - Attend the annual steering meeting to provide feedback and vote of rules and regulation changes.
  - *UGA Animal and Dairy Science:*
    - The UGA-ADS, along with the UGA – Tifton Campus and the NW Georgia Research and Education Center, will provide daily care for the heifers at the respective locations.
    - ADS faculty and staff will direct all programmatic details pertaining to the management of heifers (e.g. nutrition, health, and reproductive strategies).
    - Attend the annual steering meeting to lead the meeting and provide technical guidance.
  - *UGA College of Veterinary Medicine:*
    - Perform reproductive evaluations prior to breeding. This will include pelvic area measurements and reproductive tract maturity scores.
    - Perform pregnancy diagnoses during the program. The first (Tifton) is to determine the length of gestation in days. A blood test will be used for the first diagnosis at Calhoun due to the short numbers of days the pregnancy diagnosis must occur. The second confirm pregnancy prior to the sale.
    - The College of Veterinary Medicine will utilize these services to provide learning opportunities for current students in the college on their large animal rotation.
    - Attend the annual steering meeting to provide technical guidance.

- *Georgia Cattlemen's Association:*
  - Represent the Georgia beef cattle industry and provide input during steering meetings.
  - Provide financial service to the program (e.g. Collecting entry fees, paying invoices associated with the program, and distributing proceeds to the consignors after the annual sale of heifers).
  - Attend the annual sales and any field day or workshop associated with these programs to serve as a liaison for the organization and communicate with the attendees about the Georgia Cattlemen's Association.
- **Annual Steering Meeting**
  - Held annually to review the previous year's program and discuss needs and changes for the upcoming year. The annual meeting will occur in the summer, after the conclusion of the Calhoun Program.
  - The HERD Team is made up of County Extension Agents, Program Consignors, GCA representative, the Georgia Bull Test Committee Chairperson, UGA personnel, UGA College of Veterinary Medicine personnel, and one UGA District Extension liaison. All team members and potential new consignors are encouraged to attend.
  - County agents and current program consignors will make up the voting body. UGA and GCA personnel will serve as ex officio members.
  - County agent members of the HERD Team are added by agent nomination at the annual meeting. After receiving a positive vote from the existing team, the new member will be approved by the District Extension Liason.
  - Any suggested changes to the rules, regulation, management, and partnerships of the program will be voted on during the annual meeting. Team members must be present at the meeting to vote.

**COMMITTEES:** All committees (standing or special purpose) will consist of equal representation of two county agent and consignor (must be a current program consignor) from each location (Calhoun and Tifton programs), plus one specialist. This will result in a nine-member committee. One agent will serve as the chair of each committee. The specialist will only vote in case of a tie. This chair will report on the committee's work at the annual meeting. Members are added by nomination and vote at the annual steering meeting.

- **Sire selection committee:**
  - *Artificial Insemination Sires:* Contracts on semen are bid/renewed every two years with the option to extend an additional year. Bids will include the cost of semen, breeding, and supplies, as well as the bull available. This committee will review the bids/bulls and provide a recommendation for the company to use, a primary sire, and a secondary sire. The secondary sire will be selected to breed to heifers closely related to the primary sire.
  - *Clean-up Bulls.* Each year, the committee will assess the current need for clean-up bulls. This will be based on the age and health of the bulls currently owned by the program. When need be, the committee will work together to select bulls to purchase at sales that allow time to use in both locations breeding program. This can include, but not limited to the Calhoun and Tifton Bull Evaluation Sales and the UGA Focus on Genetically Enhanced EPD Bull Sale. In case of injury or other issue that may cause a bull to be unsound during the breeding season, the committee will work with the UGA Extension specialist to find a replacement.
- **Special purpose committees.** These committees will be appointed at the annual meeting to gather additional information to help the team reach a decision on a specific topic related to the direction of the program. This committee will report back to the group at a specified time.

## **CAPACITY**

- Tifton: Maximum capacity of 200 heifers
- Calhoun: Maximum capacity of 150 heifers
- These will be adjusted based on available resources (e.g. feed, forage, labor, etc.).
- Each consignor is allowed up to 10 heifers.
  - This number can increase based on the determined capacity and fewer entries each year.
  - This number can decrease if more heifers are nominated than the capacity of a given location.

## **CONSIGNOR ELIGIBILITY:**

- Consignors must be members of the Georgia Cattlemen's Association at the time of heifer entry nomination. If a potential consignor is interested in the program, but is not a current member, they are welcome to join when they nominate their heifers.
- 15% of the capacity will be reserved for new consignors if more heifers are nominated than a location's maximum capacity.
- Priority for the remaining space will be given to Georgia residents and previous consignors.
- Heifers from other states will be accepted if space is available.

## **INDIVIDUAL HEIFER ELIGIBILITY:**

- Heifer may be registered or commercial.
- Registered heifers must furnish a copy (not original) of registration papers at delivery.
- Heifers must be home-grown.
- Heifers must have known breed of sire. Actual sire (with registration number) is preferred.
- Actual birth dates are preferred. If actual birth date is not known, then month of birth is required (birth date will be listed as the 15th; e.g. heifers born in October will be listed as October 15).
- Heifers should weigh, when delivered, a minimum of 1.75 pounds per day. A reasonable transit weight loss will be permitted.
- Heifers must be permanently identified with a readable tattoo or brand. Consignors are subject to a fee (\$25 per head) if heifers have to be tattooed upon arrival.
- Heifers must be structurally sound and show evidence of good growth potential.
- All heifers must be in good health. Non-resident consignors should contact their local or state veterinarian for interstate permit and any additional health requirements. Program management will reserve the authority to turn away heifers due to potential problematic health concerns upon arrival.
- The following preconditioning should be completed at least 6 weeks prior to delivery:
  - Dehorned and healed
  - Dewormed
  - Weaned and actively on feeding program
  - Tattooed
  - Vaccinated and boosted for:
    - 5-Way Respiratory & Reproductive (IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV, & Lepto/Vibrio). At least one dose should be a modified live vaccine administered no later than 30 days prior to delivery.
    - 7-Way Clostridial
    - Mannheimia Bacterin Toxoid
- Consignors must turn in the vaccination verification worksheet at the time of delivery. They are encouraged to work with their county agents to collect this information. Additionally, consignors are encouraged to develop and maintain a strong working relationship with their local veterinarian to establish and implement an effective health program.

### **SALE ELIGIBILITY:**

- Registered heifers are to be DNA tested for genomic enhanced EPD's by their respective breed association. It is encouraged to have this data submitted prior to delivery. If you need assistance, please contact the Test Station. Genomic enhanced EPD's will be published in the catalog.
- All commercial heifers will be genomic tested. Upon arrival, DNA samples will be collected and submitted by the Test Station. Results will be published in the catalog.
- Registered heifers will be accepted into the program on ancestral **or** tested free pedigrees at the time of program entrance. If a new genetic defect were to arise after the program has already begun, any potential carrier heifer will be eligible for sale with notation in the sale catalog.
- Consignors must indicate by date of the first pregnancy diagnosis (approximately six weeks prior to the sale whether heifers will be sold (assuming they meet eligibility) or taken home.
- Unsound or unruly heifers will not be sale eligible.
- Heifers must have an ACTUAL pelvic measurement of at least 140 sq. cm. prior to the implementation of the breeding protocol in order to be sale eligible.
- Heifers must have a reproductive tract maturity score of at least 2 prior to the implementation of the breeding protocol in order to be sale eligible.
- Heifers must be pregnant in order to sell.

**SALE MANAGEMENT:** The auctioneer will be bid out at each year's annual meeting. Additionally, the team will determine if videos for online viewing and alternative avenues for bidding (i.e. online) are appropriate.

**CONSENT OF DATA COLLECTION:** Heifers may be used for collection of data in research projects that will be approved by the University of Georgia Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. Unless studies are designed to be observational (i.e., the use of data that can be collected as part of the existing program), approval must be obtained from the voting members of the HERD Team. Any study conducted must involve minimal risk and designed that all heifers are managed under the same protocol (i.e., no heifer will receive a treatment or have a sample collected that another heifer does not). Information collected from these studies will be used for educational purposes and/or published with individual animal and owner identification remaining confidential.

### **HEIFER MANAGEMENT ON-TEST**

*Nutrition:* The ration will consist of hay plus a supplement designed for optimum growth and development. This is not a gain test. Heifers will be fed to gain 1.50 - 1.75 pounds per day. The hay is procured through a bidding system prior to the start of each year's program based on specific nutritional guidelines. Additionally, the supplement will be developed based on the current year's feed prices to provide the least-cost ration for the targeted gain. This diet will be delivered to the heifers daily. Additionally, the amount fed may be adjusted based on visual appraisal and performance data of the heifers.

*Evaluation and Breeding:* All heifers will be evaluated for pelvic area, frame score, reproductive tract score, disposition score, and structure. It is strongly suggested that heifers should be at least 12 months of age at the time of breeding.

Approximately 40 days after the heifers are received at each location, a veterinarian from the College of Veterinary Medicine will evaluate each heifer. This will include measuring the pelvic area and assessing a reproductive tract maturity score. All heifers that meet the minimum requirements (indicated above) are

eligible to stay in the program. Heifers below the minimum may stay at the location to continue with the breeding protocol at the consignor's discretion. However, these heifers will not be eligible for the sale.

Heifer will be bred utilizing a timed artificial insemination (A.I.) protocol. They will be heat-synchronized and bred A.I. (once at each location) followed by at least 45 days with a clean-up (natural service) bull. Both A.I. and clean-up sires will be chosen by the HERD Team as described earlier. Calving ease will receive top priority in selection of bulls. Additionally, Angus bulls will be selected for both A.I. and clean-up sires. Consignors wanting to specify a different A.I. sire may do so but must furnish the semen at the time of delivery.

Station personnel will make every effort to protect and conserve the semen provided but will not be responsible for any semen loss (i.e., tank malfunction, going dry, theft, etc.)

*Liability:* Station personnel will make every effort to safeguard the health of the animals and to obtain competent veterinary services, when necessary, but will not be responsible for loss by fire, theft, injury, sickness, or death in any other way. Consigners are encouraged to evaluate risk management options for their individual heifers.

**PROGRAM COST:** Estimated cost will be announced before delivery date. The evaluation fee (minus nomination fee) is due upon delivery of heifers. This cost does not include sale expenses.

Sale expenses include, but are not limited to, auctioneer cost, online bidding (if used in that specific year), facility rental, and incidental expense. Total sale expense are subtracted from the sale price and consignors will receive a check for the balance.