

IDEA EXCHANGE

PHOTOGRAPHY

Indeed, the adage 'a picture is worth a thousand words' holds significant weight in the cattle industry. Photographs serve as vital tools for informing, promoting and captivating audiences across various platforms. From sale catalogues to social media posts, from website content to promotional materials like advertisements and calendars, compelling imagery plays a crucial role in communicating the essence of the individual and unique breeding program. Whether captured by the breeder themselves, with the assistance of a picture pen team or entrusted to the expertise of a professional photographer, the quality and effectiveness of these images can profoundly impact their intended purpose.

In the multifaceted landscape of modern cattle breeding and farming/ranching, proficiency in photography emerges as yet another valuable skill set. As breeders strive to showcase their livestock in the best possible light,

understanding the nuances of photography becomes increasingly essential. Here, in this section, we provide a platform for insights and expertise from professional photographers, camera-clicking fellow beef breeders and other CSPA members. Join us as we delve into the art and science of bovine photography, offering tips, techniques, and inspiration to elevate your imagery to new heights. Let's capture the essence of bovine beauty and excellence through the lens of creativity and expertise.

Keep an eye out for the Idea Exchange in upcoming issues, where we'll continue to present skillful tips and share innovative ideas from the CSPA membership and other recognized leaders in the beef industry on a range of topics. If you have a topic that you would like to see covered in this section, please let us know!

EMILY WATSON, BY GRACE LIVESTOCK PHOTOGRAPHY

Located in Branchton, Ontario • <https://bygracelivestockphotography.smugmug.com/>

Having quality photos is super important when marketing your cattle. Many times, the photo is the first thing a customer sees and often, what attracts them to that animal in the first place. Properly representing your animal is key. Here are some guidelines for picturing your cattle on pasture:

- Getting the right angle is one of the most important parts of taking a good picture. Try to position yourself even with the animal. Photos taken when the photographer is not square to the animal may make the animal appear distorted. Equally as important, is being at the right height. Try to position yourself level with the animal. Taking a photo from too high will shrink your subject, and likewise taking one from too low will cut off their top line and affect the appearance of their underline.

- The best position to picture beef cattle in is when they are set up, having both front legs square, and picture-side rear leg back.

- Always shoot with the sun at your back. Profile shots look best when the sun shines directly at your subject, and there are no distracting shadows that may take away from your animal.

- My favourite time to picture cattle on pasture is either early morning, or late afternoon and evening, before sunset. It is much easier to control the direction of shadowing, and cattle are typically more mobile during the cooler hours of the day. Try to avoid shooting in the late morning and mid afternoon.

- Consider the background of your photo. One of the struggles when picturing Speckle Park animals is making sure that their white top line doesn't blend into the sky. Pay attention to your position, and the landscape you're working with. Try to keep

the landscape behind them instead of the sky, so the animal stands out from the background. Another thing that will ensure your animal stands out, is having minimal objects or buildings in the background. The more distractions that appear in a photo, the less the animal stands out.

- When possible, take another person with you to help get the animal's attention. To make your animal appear the most attractive, you want the animal looking straight ahead, so have the second person making noise, head-on to the animal.





MAUREEN TUBMAN, SHOWCHAMPIONS PHOTOGRAPHY

Located near Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
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The average person takes 22 photos a day. More than 3.2 billion images, and 750,000 videos are shared daily.

The power of one image can make or break a sale, there is no debating that!

• Your business is perceived by its image. Obtaining a great photograph of your livestock all comes down to presentation. Are the cattle in good physical condition? What do their surroundings look like? Are they clean, have they been clipped? Does your photographer or camera gear have the ability to capture all of your hard work accordingly?

• What does it mean to be a herd bull or a brood cow? Herd bulls look best in good physical working condition, while being photographed on green grass. To me, that is the definition of an attractive bull representation. They're at the peak of their abilities. Hormones are flowing nicely, and they look like they should...bulls! Breeding females look best when they are in good physical condition, and milking. Again, often on green grass. These conditions are, after all, the soul purpose of breeding cattle. And so, it is ideal to represent them to the very best of their abilities.

• Sale animals obviously need to be photographed in a time frame that works with your marketing plan. This is the time to pull as much interest and profit out of them as possible. Photographing on a sunny day, with little distractions surrounding the cattle is the most ideal. Clipping the animals helps to create a clean lined look and more striking final image that naturally will draw the attention of more eyes. However, clipping cattle is not entirely necessary, and does work in some areas and marketing plans.

• The single most important part of getting a great image is the conditions. Weather, grass, clean ground, animal presentation and physical condition, etc. After that, it is your photo area, surroundings, and photo assistants. You could have every element near perfect, but if your photo pen assistants struggle to help pull the best attributes out of those animals, you've only made it to 50% of the final outcome. Not everyone is a great photo pen help, and oftentimes the people you don't expect to be great help, truly are. Hiring a professional photographer is ideal, as they are trained to be a part of your marketing plan and understand what makes or breaks a powerful image. After all, this is simply product representation! What does the world need to know about your product and how does the customer perceive it?

• An ideal photo pen is tidy, with a clean looking fence. Broken boards and pieces distract from the final look, and at the end of the day can read negatively to the audience. The cattle should have enough room to be comfortable to travel in and take a look around. If the pen is too small, the cattle will tend to have a more compacted look, and not feel comfortable to come in, look around, and pose comfortably. A popular method is to have cattle standing right along a wind-fence. This, however, is not a powerful or striking look. The fence sucks the power out of the cattle and makes them look small. I like to pull the cattle off the fence, utilizing perception. The subject is close, and the background is far, thus keeping your subject as the focus. Ideally, the background is as open and free from distractions as possible. Multiple different poses and angles are necessary to try, as the shadows can really add or subtract shape and dimension.

• Post-processing of your photographs is very important. Cropping properly, exposing and colour correcting anything that was not able to be done in camera. This is an area I excel in, handling most all ShowChampions on-farm images with over 17 years of experience in photoshop. Photoshop... a subject for another article!





DALTON PAYNE, GREENWOOD SPECKLE PARK

Located in Lloydminster, Alberta
www.greenwoodspecklepark.com

As the saying goes “a picture is worth a thousand words” and it could not be truer when it comes to the cattle industry. Having quality photos is vital to a breeding program as it is the first thing, and sometimes the only thing, people from around the world will see. Here are a few things to take into consideration the next time you go out to picture your animals that may help improve the outcome of your photos.

• Have the animal set up properly

You want an animal set up so that their front legs are close to square with the front leg farthest from the photographer set slightly back, so it is visible. The far-side hind leg should be forward, with the hind leg closest to the photographer set back to create a “scissored” look. From there, have your helper get the animal’s attention - you want the animal to hold their head high, looking forward at an angle where the far-side ear is just visible to the photographer. This setup will best display your animal’s topline, back leg set, shoulder, front-end, udder or testicular development, and navel/sheath.

• Photographer positioning

The photographer should be perpendicular to the animal and holding the camera level to the centerline of the animal. If you are taking the picture from an angle above the centerline, you will make the animal appear smaller than it really is. In contrast, if you are below the centerline, you will make the animal appear tighter middled and longer legged.

When picturing a cow, you want to be at an angle where her far-side teats are in line with the teats closest to the photographer, this will make the udder look clean. If they are not lined up it can give the illusion of larger teats and a sloppier udder. When picturing a bull, you want to be at an angle where the testicles are visible as it showcases testicular development.

• Lighting

Lighting is crucial to the success of a quality photo. Ideally, you want to set up so that the sun is shining on the photographer’s back, which would result in it being casted onto the animal’s broadside with little to no shadows. This will ensure the color of your animal and all its features are displayed clearly.

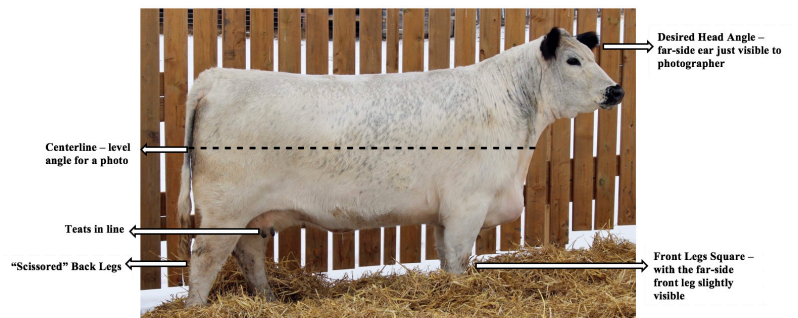
• Background

One thing that detracts from a quality photo is a background full of distractions. Avoid picturing in an area with buildings, vehicles or other animals, as this will take away from the animal in focus.

• Patience

Patience is key - remember that animals often reflect the emotions of the people working with them. If one is not cooperating, it is best to move on and come back to them once they have settled down.

While I do not consider myself a professional by any means, these are some of the tips I have learned along the way from time spent with some of the best photographers in the industry, as well as studying their work. However, there is no substitute for patience and practice - but remember, “Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect.” - Vince Lombardi



JILL RENTON, GONE WEST MEDIA

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First impressions are one of the most important keys to success in our day to day lives, whether in social settings or professional, a negative first impression can be tough to beat going forward. That’s why a quality photo of your animal is so important, that is your first impression. Whether a quick candid photo in the pasture, or a sale photo in a catalogue, that image influences the viewer going forward not only on that animal but your operation, you as a producer, and even your breed.

Seems like a lot of weight for an image to hold, but whatever we choose to print, post or snap, should always be viewed as a marketing opportunity for every aspect of your operation.

The most common photos taken of cattle are obviously sale photos, and to help your photographer help you, keep in mind these tips before your next picture day.

• Contact your photographer to book early. Once you know your catalogue deadline, book your photo day for at least a week to 10 days before that deadline to allow for weather delays and editing time.

• Do initial clipping early. Show cattle can be groomed and fitted day of, but don’t wait too late to peel heads on the rest of the bull pen, a little regrowth photographs better. Also, keep an eye on bedding and tag build up well ahead of photo day and adjust. Some tag can be edited out, but not all.

• Plan out where in your yard will be best for photos, not just the easiest. Level ground, secure fencing, just enough ground cover, whether straw or grass, and plain backgrounds are all important to location.

• Quality pen help is key! Most successful photos happen because of the enthusiasm of the person catching ears. A lot of embarrassing noises must be made, and what happens in the pen stays in the pen.

• Have patience. Some animals will picture in 30 seconds, other animals might take 30 minutes. Trust that your photographer is always doing the best for you. Your success is our success.

BRAEDEN WEPPLER

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The two essentials when becoming a good photographer are both patience and cattle sense. Livestock photography isn't for everyone and can become a stressful day for all those involved pretty quickly. Below I will try and outline some brief points to help avoid those stressful situations and to enhance your photography experience.



- The correct stance as a photographer is the most important part of a great photo. You should be perpendicular with the animal, their front feet planted square with their back feet off set with the closest leg to you extended back. This position showcases all the animals' attributes. Your photos should be taken at the same level as the animal. Looking down on the animal will make them appear smaller than they are and if you are positioned too low, that will affect the lighting and view of their dimension.

- As far as equipment goes, you do not need the most expensive camera and lens. That being said, if you are taking photos that will be published in a catalog, a cell phone doesn't offer a high enough resolution.

Now, if all these steps for preparation and positioning are taken, you will be set up for a successful picturing experience. But take it from me, it takes time, patience, and a whole lot of practice.

- To start, a good picture pen is essential. What I mean by this is if your pen is too large you will spend more time running yourself and the livestock around than getting the desired picture. If the pen is too small the animal won't set up naturally and may feel confined. The size of the pen is also affected by the distance required between you and the animal you are picturing. Each camera lens is different and may require different distances to ensure everything you desire is in the frame. The picture pen ideally has a clear background, as a cluttered background (i.e. barns, fence lines, other cattle) doesn't only look messy, but may also take the focus away from your camera/the animal being pictured. A clear background also makes editing halters off much easier.

- Make sure you plan your picture day in advance. A good crew goes a long way, especially when picturing a large group of animals. People that know how cattle act and who can get and keep their attention without getting them worked up makes things run smoothly. Always plan for the weather, as lighting is key to a nice crisp clear photo. The sun should always be to your back to avoid shadows and you should adjust your position throughout the day to maintain that. Picturing too late or too early in the day will affect how bright or dark your photos are. Midday is typically a hard time to get a great photo as the overhead sun creates shadows on the sides of the animal.



Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition of the Idea Exchange!