



CROSSBREEDING IS BACK

After a long hiatus for many in the beef business, crossbreeding is back and why not, it works! Crossbreeding nearly always generates more profit in this business where profit is increasingly hard to come by. The benefits in cost reduction and increased production that are possible through the planned use of heterosis are well documented. Most research shows that a crossbred commercial cow will out produce her purebred counterparts by the equivalent of between 1 and 1.5 additional calves over her lifetime. That's an enormous increase, but the benefits that breed complementarity bring, also offer substantial added value. Beef breeds that have positioned themselves to thrive in a future dominated by designed crossbreeding systems are those best prepared to move forward and be relevant in a "new," more cost driven beef business. Most research concludes that a complimentary combination of Continental and British breeds provide the most value to US beef systems. Years of research and advanced genetic improvement have positioned Simmental genetics as the logical choice for the Continental portion of a value based crossbreeding program. No other continental breed has placed the amount of emphasis and selection pressure on economically important traits both maternal and terminal over the past 15 years. As an additional proof of commitment to profitability, all American Simmental commercial programs are designed to promote the value of breed complementarity and hybrid vigor for commercial cattlemen. Any breed program that discourages the use of planned crossbreeding by commercial herds truly borders on being irresponsible. Whether you choose high value purebred Simmental bulls to get the most from your first cross or choose to use designed SimAngus composites to make crossbreeding systems simple, crossbreeding with Simmental genetics just makes good sense!

The 7070 grid program is a good example of an effort that not only encourages crossbreeding, it is nearly dependent on it! The use of highly selected Simmental genetics in combination with high value British breeds is the most predictable way to produce beef that excels both in quality and cutability. A long standing industry goal to produce beef carcasses that are in excess of 70% USDA Choice or higher, 70% USDA Yield Grades 1 and 2 and thus reduce "out" cattle is the charge behind 7070beef.com. Considering that US beef industry averages just 2 years ago were 57% Choice or higher, 52% YG 1 and 2 and more than 22% "out" carcasses, achieving 70:70:0 is far from near our grasp. The US beef production system has long differentiated itself in the world market place by providing taste fat (marbling) and thus improved palatability. Our ability to produce relatively cheap ration energy was at the forefront of factors that made this possible. Most industry experts still agree that producing highly marbled beef needs to be a significant part of the US beef strategic plan for the future. The other part of the carcass value equation however is changing. We simply can no longer produce obscene quantities of waste fat to satisfy our markets desire for taste fat. Part of the reason that excess fat production is no longer acceptable is that our "relatively cheap ration energy" has become expensive primarily because of policies that put all forms of energy into one global competitive category. Because waste fat is extremely inefficient to produce and expensive to dispose of, this industry must promote strategies to reduce waste fat production and thus substantially reduce costs for all beef business segments.

SimAngus cattle offer real solutions for achieving the industry goal of 70:70:0 that's why the 7070 grid was chosen. After collecting thousands of carcass records on Simmental x Angus and Simmental Red Angus crossbred steers, and evaluating most of the available packer value based grids, the one that returned the most premium on a combination of high quality



and high cutability was 7070. To date, nearly 5000 sire identified SimAngus steer progeny have been harvested through the ASA's carcass merit program in addition to more than 2500 high percent Continental or straight British cattle. As a group, the SimAngus steers most nearly met the 70:70:0 industry goals being 74% Choice or higher, 64 YG 1 and 2, with fewer than 4% out carcasses. This data represents hundreds of harvest groups, reared, fed and harvested all over the US. Surely in the future more grids will embrace the obvious value of maximizing taste fat while minimizing waste fat. When you add the value proposition of a leaner, highly marbled carcass to the reduced cost of production associated with producing lean tissue instead of fat, the final savings to the aggregate beef business can be immense.

The use of dollar value Indexes is becoming increasingly important to promote advanced selection while simplifying decision making. American Simmental offers two value index EPDs to promote futuristic selection for profitability instead of just selection for independent traits. The All Purpose Index (API) combines all economically important trait EPDs into a single selection tool with dollars of profit as the unit of measurement. This index assumes that producers keep their own replacement females and includes the value of those genetics to the entire beef industry. For those who do not keep replacement females, the Terminal Index (TI) is more appropriate. Obviously it prioritizes growth and carcass traits while the API takes into account the huge importance of maternal value in addition to traits that effect total dollar returns.

When you make the choice to crossbreed for greater profitability or make plans for a logically upgrade to your current crossbreeding program, consider the years of commitment to research and product value improvement that SimGenetics offer your beef business.