

A Look at the Use of Santa Gertrudis Genetics at Utah State University

SANTA GERTRUDIS BREEDERS INTERNATIONAL HAS MADE GREAT STRIDES in recent years to demonstrate Santa Gertrudis' ability to thrive in a variety of environmental conditions, be profitable in both purebred and commercial cattle operation and be one of the world's leading and most efficient producers of quality beef. Collaborations with land grant universities are playing an integral part in proving the viability of Santa Gertrudis to cattle producers.

The recent collaboration with Auburn University was highlighted in the June issue of *Santa Gertrudis USA*. More recently, SGBI has been working on a collaboration with Utah State University. To investigate the advantages of crossbreeding with Santa Gertrudis, Utah State University plans to implement crossbreeding strategies to maximize the hybrid vigor of their cattle herd using Santa Gertrudis genetics.

"The big attraction to us was the fact that we can incorporate some of these genetics and really improve some of the performance and adaptability of our herds here in Utah," explains Matthew Garcia, Ph.D., assistant professor and beef specialist in the Department of Animal, Dairy and Veterinary Sciences at Utah State University.

John Ford, SGBI executive director, says Santa Gertrudis is an excellent fit for crossbreeding programs, and is excited to see the results



from this project. "The versatility of Santa Gertrudis ensures that it is a compatible and profitable cross with a wide variety of breeds, resulting in an extremely valuable F1 replacement female. Regardless of breed, crossing with Santa Gertrudis results in F1 females that are productive, predictable and profitable in any operation," Ford says.

The plan is to artificially inseminate (AI) all 250 cows in Utah State Universities' herd in Logan. Since it was June before Utah State could AI the herd, this year the project will be more of a pilot study, as only 40 head will be AI'ed. The current herd at Utah State University has no Shorthorn or Brahman influence, and Garcia explains that they will achieve 100 percent hybrid vigor after the first cross with Santa Gertrudis genetics. "We know the second that we cross our black-hided herds, or even some of our red herds, that we're going to see 100-percent hybrid vigor in those offspring and they're going to be highly productive and highly desirable."

During the first two years of the project, the focus will be on generating data and following the crossbred calves from birth to carcass. Garcia is confident that the data will show the highly-desirable effects of crossbreeding with Santa Gertrudis and expects Utah producers will want to participate in the second phase of the project, which will give them the opportunity to incorporate Santa Gertrudis genetics into their own herds.

The data generated throughout the project will be shared with producers across Utah through various Extension programs. "Connecting our breed with land grant universities that have the mission of teaching, research and educational outreach is an integral part of SGBI's effort to expand the breed's industry presence," Ford says.

Although there are very few Santa Gertrudis breeders in Utah, Garcia explains that Utah producers are very progressive and he is optimistic that they will be receptive to the breed, especially once they have the data to prove their value. "We do have some very progressive producers who are willing to try new things, and if we're able to put out favorable results, we're going to have some producers who are more than willing to utilize Santa Gertrudis genetics."

The results from this project will have implications for a variety of different areas that can impact Utah producers. According to Garcia, this project has the ability to impact every aspect of cattle production – genomics, reproduction and nutrition. Throughout the project, longevity, calving intervals, feed efficiency, conversion rates and disease resistance data will be collected.

"This is a cool project for us to look at because we're not just looking at incorporating Santa Gertrudis genetics; we're looking at incorporating genetics that affect every phase of the beef production system here in Utah," Garcia says. 🐄

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Maddi *Emma*

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