

SANTA GERTRUDIS BREEDERS INTERNATIONAL



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | June 17, 2021

This article first appeared in the June issue of Santa Gertrudis USA

Predictability, Pounds and Profit

STAR 5 Females Offer Commercial Producers Countless Advantages

Written by Micky Burch

KINGSVILLE, Texas - As many Santa Gertrudis breeders know, the STAR 5 program is a three-level grading-up system designed for herds to progress from a non-Santa Gertrudis base to purebred status. But along the way, purebred breeders and commercial cattlemen alike have found significant value in Santa Gertrudis F1 females.

Santa Gertrudis cattle are becoming well known for complementarity with numerous breeds, as cattlemen understand the value of crossbreeding, heterosis and combining breeds that excel in different characteristics. Breeders have identified multiple crosses with Santa Gertrudis to meet production and marketing objectives, and individual operation goals. Many times, those goals include marketing commercial females and cow-calf pairs.

Texas Oaks Cattle Ranch, Brenham, Texas, had a hot spring sale season, first at the San Antonio All Breeds Bull and Commercial Female Sale where one of their pens of pairs sold for \$3,000. They followed that up with the Grand Champion Pen of Females in the All Breeds Range Bull and Commercial Female Sale at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo with a pen of Gert-Hereford cross pairs, which also garnered them \$3,000. They rounded out the spring with the Champion Pen at the Southeast Texas Independent Cattlemen's Association Bull and Heifer Sale, Beaumont, Texas. Their high sellers at this sale included \$2,300 for Gert-Hereford crosses and \$2,400 for Gert-Red Angus pairs.

Matt Zibilski, Texas Oaks Cattle Ranch manager, attributes the ranch's success to the increasing quality of the cattle. "We're getting the quality to where it needs to be," he says of producers breeding Santa Gertrudis crosses. "Everybody is doing a better job breeding them."

Evidence of that is seen in the noticeably improved cattle performance. Specifically, Zibilski noted the females are docile, sound uddered and wean a heavy calf. Those characteristics keep buyers coming back, he says. "People are seeing that these cattle are fault free," he explains. "We can sell cattle like these and top sales for years to come."

By and large, Zibilski believes the cattle are bringing what they're worth. As a rule of thumb, he quotes a mentor who once told him to multiply the value of a weaned steer by

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two to come up with the value of a replacement female, and multiple it by three to calculate the value of a cow-calf pair. Oftentimes, that equates to \$2,000 to \$2,500 – a price-point for many pairs sold this spring.

Those are the kinds of numbers Jim Corporryn, Corporryn Acres/Pinnacle Cattle Co., Schulenburg, Texas, has been getting for his pairs at public auction. Corporryn has been breeding F1 Red Motts for more than 25 years, and has successfully taken those females back to low birth weight Angus and Brangus bulls to create many of his entries at the San Antonio All Breeds Bull and Commercial Female Sale.

Corporryn explains that it's the only consignment auction they attend each year, so they go all out and reserve two pens that consist of five pairs each (10 pairs total) for their Red Mott females with black calves at side.

"There are usually 200 pairs of all breeds at San Antonio," he points out. In 2015 and 2016, Corporryn Acres consigned the champion Santa Gertrudis-influenced pen, and was then named Grand Champion Pen of Females over all breeds at San Antonio. This spring, the pairs Corporryn consigned sold from \$2,500 to \$3,300 each.

Privately, the Corporryn family sells upwards of 50 commercial pairs annually, selling the remainder of their females open, and have recently started marketing Red Mott bulls to commercial cattlemen who put them back on Braford, Charolais and Brangus females. "Commercial breeders like heavy weaning weights because the bottom line is profit," Corporryn says of his experience. "These cattle add pounds at the auction barn, and they can retain the females." Corporryn is a true believer that Santa Gertrudis cattle cross with English breeds better than any other *Bos indicus* breed, creating performance-leading cattle.

Regardless of whether a buyer is looking for replacement females, pairs or even a bull, Corporryn likes to concentrate on the relationship being built, sighting his appreciation over the years for repeat buyers among the ever-changing cattle industry.

Joe Jones, general manager at Briggs Ranches, Victoria, Texas, has seen the cattle industry change, especially when it comes to making commercial Santa Gertrudis females. For Jones, the primary deciding factor of what breed to cross with a Santa Gertrudis is environment.

"We've gotten along exceptionally well with Herefords, but recently have started using Brangus bulls because there's more demand for blacks and Brahman," he says of selling cattle north and east out of Texas.

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Briggs Ranches holds two production sales annually. The fall sale will see some 200 to 250 commercial females and 100 bulls run through the ring, where Jones notes that straight-bred Santa Gertrudis sell for similar money as the crossbreds because commercial cattlemen can take them home and breed them to their bull of choice. Recently, Briggs Ranches held their spring sale where, along with guest consignors, 100 commercial females were sold. Bred females garnered an average of \$1,800, while those with calves at side ranged from \$2,200 to \$2,500. The group of females consisted of a range of crosses, including Red Motts, straight reds that were Santa Gertrudis-Brangus cross, and black half-bloods with black calves at side.

Performance and hardiness are the top reasons Jones believes the sales are successful. "Crossbreeding opens up another market for someone to use a different breed of bull," he points out. "And that's where the money is made – in efficiency."

Even through dryer conditions, like much of the Southwest part of the country is currently experiencing, the calves are resilient. "The performance is there, we just have to give them a chance to perform," he says of starting early weaned calves on feed due to drought conditions.

Briggs Ranches also consigns cattle to the sales at San Antonio, Houston and Beaumont. While Houston and Beaumont were traditional in-person sales this year, San Antonio was virtual due to COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions. Jones says the sale, held in a real-time auction format, was still phenomenal, with commercial Santa Gertrudis cattle bringing record money.

With so many breeds that complement Santa Gertrudis to create a STAR 5, the crossbreeding possibilities are almost endless. "I like a good cow no matter what color she is," Zibilski concludes. "But these Santa Gertrudis females are good."

Photo:

STAR5.jpg

Cutline: Jim Corporon has been breeding F1 Red Motts for more than 25 years and has successfully taken those females back to low birth weight Angus and Brangus bulls. *Photo by Jim Banner, Southern Livestock Standard.*