

SANTA GERTRUDIS BREEDERS INTERNATIONAL



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Super Stars

Santa Gertrudis STAR 5 Cattle Meet the Needs of Commercial Cattlemen

Written by Jessie Topp-Becker

KINGSVILLE, Texas – Santa Gertrudis genetics offer versatility and profitability, and that is especially true for commercial cattlemen who utilize the breed’s genetics in their programs. The versatility of Santa Gertrudis ensures that it is a compatible and profitable cross with a wide variety of breeds. Whether commercial cattlemen are looking for highly marketable feeder calves or extremely valuable F1 replacement females, Santa Gertrudis are competitive and profitable in every sector of the industry. In fact, Santa Gertrudis-influenced females are quickly becoming the beef industry’s commercial female of choice.

Santa Gertrudis are well known for their adaptability and exceptional maternal traits, as well as for their carcass quality.

“Santa Gertrudis provide a lot of breeding flexibility,” says Webb Fields, Santa Gertrudis Breeders International (SGBI) executive director. “It’s probably why they cross so well.

“We really want to be known as a red-hided, heat tolerant, heterosis provider, and so that allows us to do a lot of different things in terms of crosses,” he adds. “Our membership has focused so heavily in terms of carcass quality and continued to put added pressure on fertility and maternal ability, and so we think a Santa Gertrudis-cross animal makes a tremendous cow across the country.”

The Santa Gertrudis grading-up program, known as the STAR 5 program, provides SGBI members the ability to progress from a non-Santa Gertrudis-based herd to purebred Santa Gertrudis status. Because of Santa Gertrudis’ ability to perform well when crossed with a variety of breeds, the possibilities are nearly endless. However, some crosses have historically been more popular than others.

One of the most popular STAR 5 crosses is the Santa Gertrudis-Hereford cross.

“They’re great in terms of their phenotype and maternal ability, and can really go anywhere in the country,” Fields says.

The Super American – a Santa Gertrudis-Brangus cross – is another popular STAR 5 animal.

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“We think their growth is tremendous and still holds a ton of heterosis [even though it’s a cross of two *Bos indicus* breeds] and performance,” Fields says. “They are really popular along the coast.”

Beyond a Hereford or Brangus cross, Santa Gertrudis genetics cross well with other breeds as well, including Black Angus, Simmental, Sim-Angus or Red Angus.

The Santa Gertrudis-Red Angus cross, now commonly referred to as American Red, has started to get a lot of attention lately.

“Red Angus and Santa Gertrudis cross so well in terms of carcass quality, maternal ability, growth, etcetera,” Fields explains.

Offspring from this cross are well-suited for commercial producers seeking quality replacement females and steers.

Unlike the other STAR 5s, the American Red program is a tagging program – launched by SGBI and the Red Angus Association of America in February 2020 – with specific parameters that must be met for cattle to be recorded as American Red within the registry system. In addition, producers must purchase tags to market their cattle as American Reds.

Because the program has specific genetic parameters, it’s important to remember that all Santa Gertrudis-Red Angus crosses can be registered as STAR 5s, but not every Santa Gertrudis-Red Angus animal can be considered, or registered, as an American Red.

While the American Red is a popular cross, Fields reminds producers that it is only one of many crosses that meet the needs of today’s commercial cattlemen.

“American Red cattle are just one component of our STAR 5 program,” Fields says.
Superior Adaptability Spurs Growth

One of the defining traits of Santa Gertrudis is the breed’s ability to adapt to various environmental conditions. While Santa Gertrudis are known to perform well in the South and Southeast, in recent years, Santa Gertrudis genetics – purebred and STAR 5 – have started to make their way to other areas across the United States.

“We know that our strong point is in the South and Southeast, it has been for many years, and we continue to have a lot of demand in the Gulf Coast region,” Fields says. “We’re also seeing that influence going north and west, and we’ve seen a lot of influence out in Utah, California and Idaho.”

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"STAR 5 cattle are adaptable, whether you need heat tolerance, adaptability or added performance, these cattle can go anywhere," he adds. "We're seeing that as we send more genetics into some new areas we haven't been to yet."

Regardless of what area of the country a commercial cattleman resides, crossing with Santa Gertrudis adds valuable heterosis to a cattle herd and provides added performance.

"We make a tremendous female that can be put into a cow herd across the country that's not going to take any carcass quality away and, in a lot of scenarios, add quality into that next generation," Fields says.

Since Fields started leading the growing breed association last year, he's been inundated with questions about where cattlemen can find STAR 5 cattle, specifically the red motts.

"I found out very early on that we just can't make enough of them," he says.

Moving forward, Fields says SGBI and its members will continue "to focus on the needs of commercial cattlemen and provide them with superior Santa Gertrudis genetics."