



SANTA GERTRUDIS

USA

JULY 2017 | VOLUME 20, NUMBER 7



Santa Gertrudis



The Preferred American
Beef Breed

Data Proven BULLS



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SANTA GERTRUDIS COMPOSITE BULLS FOR SALE.**



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Wendt Ranches' Herd Bull 1131/13

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10 straw minimum**

Reg. #20134080

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EPD	0.06	14.61	27.95	-4.49	2.82	20.23	0.38	0.01	0.01	0.02	10	\$25.41
Accuracy	0.25	0.47	0.39	0.21	—	0.30	0.28	0.29	0.18	0.41		

We REALLY like him now!

Just look at these offspring and we think you will agree –



SS

Wendt Ranches

5475 FM 457, Bay City, TX 77414

email: wendtranches@hotmail.com

Gene Kubecka

979-240-5311

Daniel Kubecka

979-240-5312

SGBI Herd #621, established 1954

SS

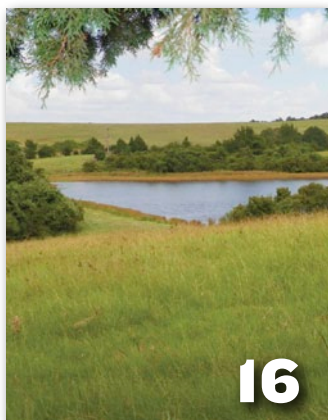
SANTA GERTRUDIS USA

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Santa Gertrudis USA (ISSN-10985026, USPS-013-876) is published monthly for \$30.00 US by *Santa Gertrudis USA* located at P.O. Box 427, Timnath, CO 80547. Periodicals postage paid at San Antonio, Texas and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: *Santa Gertrudis USA*, P.O. Box 427, Timnath, CO 80547. Subscriptions: \$30 U.S. per year for all subscriptions to the U.S. and her possessions. First class subscriptions in the U.S. are available at \$50. Foreign surface mail subscriptions are \$30. Foreign airmail subscriptions are as follows: Mexico/Canada - \$60, Central America & South America - \$100, Europe and all others - \$110. We accept Mastercard, VISA and Discover. Materials in *Santa Gertrudis USA* may not be reproduced without the permission from the publisher.

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July 2017 | Volume 20, Number 7

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ON THE COVER

Santa Gertrudis females at 5 Bar E Farm, Altha, Fla.
Photo by Darren Richmond.

Providing Polled Power Genetics to the Santa Gertrudis Breed



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Red Hot Bulls made their way into ranches from California to Georgia and internationally. Red Doc is grateful for your support and will continue to work hard to bring you and your ranch exceptional genetics. - Dr. Roland, Elia and Sanchez family



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Ramblings from the Open Range

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

By John Ford

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Earlier this summer I spent a week in the Southeast sitting in livestock auction barns, visiting with barn managers and their customers, both buyers and sellers, watching thousands of head run through the ring. It was time well spent. The return drive to Kingsville, Texas allowed me to reflect on the status of the industry, the condition of the nation's cowherd and the many opportunities on the horizon for our breed's genetic package.

The sight I found most disturbing was the number of packer cows sold during my week on the road. I watched 6-, 7- and 8-year-old black-hided, heavily-influenced *Bos taurus* cows run through the ring headed to the packer. They were smooth-mouthed and non-productive at an age I think a cow should still be bringing a heavy, healthy calf to the weaning pen. We know that longevity is one of the most important economic characteristics in cattle. We are also aware that there are genetic differences associated with longevity and that commercial breeders can take advantage of breed differences to extend the productive life of a female. Why then would commercial cow-calf producers utilize a breeding program or scheme that penalizes cow productivity?

I suspect a large segment of the cow-calf sector has concentrated on hide color and single-trait extremes, seduced by a branded marketing program that is focused strictly on carcass quality with little emphasis placed on cow efficiencies. Selection for longevity, maternal efficiency and structural soundness have been neglected, resulting in females that are reproductively inefficient, unable to maintain acceptable body condition and structurally unsound. Compounding the problem, commercial producers with basically a single-breed production scheme have made replacement female selections based on terminal market traits, validating faulty breeding decisions with

breed association indices ill-suited for the selection of replacement females. The result: cows whose productive life has ended at or before age 6, 7 or 8.

The advantages of crossbreeding are well-documented and can have a big impact on a producer's net return. Heterosis (hybrid vigor) and breed complementarity are the primary benefits realized from a properly planned crossbreeding program. Especially beneficial is maternal heterosis, the combined improvement in traits from the dam that cause increases in her performance and that of her progeny. Maternal heterosis in a beef cow includes younger

age at puberty, increased calving rate, increased survival of her calf to weaning, longevity and pounds of calf produced in her lifetime. Regardless of some breed association marketing programs and the "spin" placed on the value of a single-breed branded marketing program, there is a free lunch in the beef business that puts money in a producer's pocket, and it is heterosis.

Longevity, stayability, calving ease and early breed-back are traits in which Santa Gertrudis females and Santa Gertrudis F1 females excel. 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 – Angus, Hereford, Red Angus, Charolais or any other – crossing with Santa Gertrudis results in F1 females that are productive, predictable and profitable in any operation. Our breed's genetic package offers commercial cow-calf producers a profitable alternative to the single-breed production scheme. SGBI's message of productive profitability isn't a spin; it is a research-proven fact. 🐄

SGBI

Need to Know

Ordering Beef Health and Nutritional Products Through Texas Beef Cattle Science Center

As stated in the June issue of *Santa Gertrudis USA*, Santa Gertrudis Breeders International has established a preferred supplier agreement with the Texas Beef Cattle Science Center located in Kerrville, Texas. Under the agreement, SGBI members receive 10 percent discounts on beef cattle health supplies and nutritional products, as well as MVP livestock supplements and minerals. Don't let the company name fool you; Texas Beef Cattle Science Center sells to beef producers across the country and is affiliated with Stockman's Supply LLC, Starkville, Miss.

Request a product catalog by contacting Diana or Dani at SGBI. To take advantage of the Texas Beef Cattle Science Center SGBI member discount, place beef cattle health supply orders directly through Stockman's Supply by calling (888) 320-6977. Identify yourself as a member of SGBI and a customer of Texas Beef Cattle Science Center prior to placing your order. To order lick tubs or livestock supplements and minerals, contact Wayne at (830) 864-4729 or (830) 992-1851.

This month's Texas Beef Cattle Science Center product of interest is the Allflex Tissue Sampling Applicator. Producers wishing to simplify the DNA collection process, eliminating the problems associated with hair collection, should consider purchasing an Allflex Tissue Sampling Applicator. The Allflex Tissue Sampling Applicator is used to punch and collect a tissue sample from an animal's ear. The applicator allows clean, easy and efficient collection of tissue samples for DNA analysis. As each tissue punch is collected, it is automatically sealed inside a GeneSeek tissue sampling unit collection tube (ordered and coded through SGBI) in a specially designed preservative. Tissue samples can be stored at room temperature for up to one year before analysis, providing producers with submission flexibility. 🐄

CAROLINA CORNER

Thank You! Buyers & Consigners at the
BREEDERS OF THE CAROLINAS SALE

VOLUME BUYER

Kevin Crutchfield

**BUYERS OF
HIGH-SELLING LOTS**

**Double C Farm
Tinney Farms**



Buyers of the high-selling lots and the volume buyer from the Breeders of the Carolinas Sale are, left to right, Caroline Creech, Kevin Crutchfield, Bill Cameron and Arlin Taylor.

Mark your calendar for our next Field Day!

Sept. 30, 2017 • 10:00 a.m

Creech Farms, Zebulon, N.C.

www.sgbreedersofthecarolinas.com

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Email: ccreech6@gmail.com

CF

CF

Herd No. 37879

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Mount Ulla, NC 28125

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-S



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**Santa Gertrudis
BREEDERS OF THE CAROLINAS**

For more information:
contact Scott Sherrill, President
(404) 402-5601



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

By Yancey Strait

(972) 841-0989 | yancey_strait@yahoo.com

Fellow Santa Gertrudis Breeders,

Why do you raise Santa Gertrudis? My family raises Santa Gertrudis because they perform in our environment. This is the same reason my great-grandfather, Y.C. Strait, started raising Santa Gertrudis more than 65 years ago. In the 1950s my family raised purebred Santa Gertrudis, as well as a cross

that they coined "Santangus."

I have had many discussions over the years regarding the Santa Gertrudis cow and her versatility. There are many cattle producers that believe certain crosses make the best mother cows. I believe the very best mother cow is 3/8 Brahman and 5/8 Shorthorn, a purebred Santa Gertrudis. Cross a Santa Gertrudis cow with Angus, Charolais, Hereford or almost any bull, and you will wean off a heavy calf that you will be proud of. There is tremendous demand for both Santa Gertrudis and Santa Gertrudis-cross females but a limited supply available. I often ask myself, "How do we increase supply to meet demand for our Santa Gertrudis females?"

I believe that the easiest way to increase the number of Santa Gertrudis-cross females is to increase the use of Santa Gertrudis bulls in the commercial cattle sector. This is the hardest market to develop, but one that is key to any seed-stock producer. An increase in the number of Santa Gertrudis bulls being sold and used means an increase in Santa Gertrudis-cross females.

If you have a purebred Santa Gertrudis cow herd and have been crossing your cows with bulls of other breeds, I would encourage you to periodically breed them back to a Santa Gertrudis bull to replenish the factory. The Santa Gertrudis cow is valuable due to her versatility, productivity and longevity. With that said, a Santa Gertrudis female can only be produced by a Santa Gertrudis bull. As breeders of Santa Gertrudis and Santa Gertrudis-cross cattle, we must focus on raising cattle that add value to the commercial cattle industry.

I hope everyone is having a great summer. 🐾

SANTA GERTRUDIS SALE

Reports

BREEDERS OF THE CAROLINAS SALE

MAY 13, 2017 | CHESTER, S.C.

SALE AVERAGES

33 Registered Lots	\$2,242	8 Bred Heifers	\$1,700
20 STAR 5 Lots	\$1,617	4 Bred Cows	\$1,700
3 Pairs	\$4,000	4 Bulls	\$2,987
9 Open Heifers	\$2,083		

The Breeders of the Carolinas Sale was sponsored by the Santa Gertrudis Breeders of the Carolinas Association, and the sale consultant was Bill Lundberg. The high-selling lot was consigned by Double C Farm, Raeford, N.C. and was sold to Tinney Farms, Hanceville, Ala. for \$4,250. The high-selling open heifer was consigned by Creech Farms, Zebulon, N.C. and was sold to Tinney Farms, Hanceville, Ala. for \$4,000. The high-selling bull was consigned by KC Farm, Shady Valley, Tenn. and was sold to Double C Farm, Raeford, N.C. for \$3,350. The volume buyer was Kevin Crutchfield, Midland, N.C. 🐾

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District 4 - Arlin Taylor (Ala.)

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(256) 352-3192 | arlint@bellsouth.net

District 5 - Tony Creech (N.C.)

Creech Farms

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District 6 - Todd Osborne (Mo.)

Osborne Livestock Co.

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SANTA GERTRUDIS DISTRICT VI BREEDERS



Look for me,
PF Lucky's Lady,
at the Kentucky National
Show and Sale!

KENTUCKY NATIONAL SANTA GERTRUDIS SHOW AND SALE July 14-15, 2017

**Western Kentucky Expo Center
Bowling Green, Ky.**

**We are consigning 3 open females:
PF Lucky's Lady 106, PF 446 and PF 376.
We look forward to seeing you there!**

***Thank you Kenneth Caldbeck, Gallant, Ala.,
for purchasing our bred heifer at the
Crimson Classic Sale!***

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REGISTRATIONS, STAR 5 RECORDINGS AND TRANSFERS BY DISTRICT

MAY 2017

ACTIVE MEMBERS

District	Purebred Reg.	STAR 5 Reg.	Performance Only	Purebred & STAR 5 Trans.
1	2	5	0	1
2	112	5	23	99
3	39	1	0	23
4	11	13	10	21
5	19	0	2	32
6	47	1	0	11

JUNIOR MEMBERS

District	Purebred Reg.	STAR 5 Reg.	Performance Only	Purebred & STAR 5 Trans.
1	14	7	2	7
2	2	1	0	2
3	0	0	0	2
4	10	0	0	2
5	5	0	0	4

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SANTA GERTRUDIS Juniors

By Casey Pitchford, President



Hey y'all! My name is Casey Pitchford. I have been on the National Junior Santa Gertrudis Association (NJSGBA) Board of Directors for four years now, and I am currently serving as your NJSGBA president. Serving on the Board is by far one of the best decisions I have made. I'm very sad to say that I am leaving my at-large position after this term ends in

2018, but I have learned so much along the way.

Once again we had an amazing National Junior Santa Gertrudis Show in Lake Charles, La. I was very impressed with the quality of animals exhibited and thought the first bull show was a hit! I would like to welcome all of our new members to the Santa Gertrudis association. Gerts are by far the best breed there is, and I love to see the association grow and flourish. After all, we're talking about "God's cattle." I also want to welcome the new directors who were recently elected. Being a director is a huge responsibility, but is well worth it. Always remember that in everything you do, you

SANTA GERTRUDIS

Calendar

JULY

14-15 Kentucky National Show & Sale,
Bowling Green, Ky.

23-27 GOALS Conference, Nashville, Tenn.

SEPTEMBER

16 Mid-Coast Cattleman's Opportunity Sale,
Hallettsville, Texas

15-16 District 6 Haltered Heifer Show & Sale,
Richmond, Ind.

29-Oct. 22 State Fair of Texas, Dallas, Texas

30 Arkoma Santa Gertrudis Association Sale,
Tulsa, Okla.

30 Breeders of the Carolinas Field Day,
Zebulon, N.C.

OCTOBER

1 Arkoma Santa Gertrudis Association Show,
Tulsa, Okla.

7 Alabama Connection Sale, Cullman, Ala.

NOVEMBER

4 Mt. Laurel Sale, Calhoun, Ga.

10-11 Tri-Star Santa Gertrudis Sale,
Bloomington, Texas

18 South Texas Heritage Sale, Robstown, Texas

SANTA GERTRUDIS WELCOMES

New Members

Junior Members

Matthew Aparicio, Palacios, Texas

Angel Soza, Pasadena, Texas

Kole Schmitt, Fayetteville, Texas

Klayten Schmitt, Fayetteville, Texas

Julian Alvarez, Hempstead, Texas

Myka Duckworth, Morton, Miss.

Carrie Conrad, Conrad Lane Farms,

Wallingford, Ky.

Kaelyn Dozier, Waller, Texas

Colton Tudhope, San Antonio, Texas

Natalie Marie Bennett, Kaufman, Texas

Kadin York, Rowlett, Texas

Raychel Lane, Rowlett, Texas

Mackleney Johnson, Nacogdoches, Texas

C. Stephen Saxe, Conroe, Texas

William Hogan, Mount Pleasant, Texas

Addyson Phillips, Normangee, Texas

Commercial Members

L Bar H Cattle, Mount Pleasant, Texas

are representing our breed as a whole. We need to help and encourage all members and do our best to make sure everything runs smoothly.

Now on to the topic of the month: heat tolerance. The sun really takes a toll on cattle during the warmer months. Gerts are the perfect breed of cattle to have during that time. Their Brahman influence is key in tolerating the hot summers. This is such an asset for commercial and purebred breeders, especially in the southern half of the United States. It takes a remarkable animal to withstand the extreme heat of the summers we have. While long-haired cattle spend their hot

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 »

SANTA GERTRUDIS *Production*

DO YOUR COWS FIT YOUR ENVIRONMENT?

By Randy L. Stanko, Ph.D., Texas A&M University-Kingsville



Most beef cattle producers who reside south of Interstate 20 know that a little *Bos indicus* influence can be a benefit, whereas for those of us south of I-10 it is pretty much a necessity. There is no doubt that the natural environment, particularly the weather, can affect both cattle and ranchers alike. However, regardless of our geographic location, I think we can all agree that our beef cows have become larger-framed and heavier-muscled. In fact, it has been estimated that mature cow size has increased by more than 30 percent in the last 40 years. Is this a good trend or something that we should be concerned about? Well, in my opinion, it depends.

We really shouldn't be surprised that our cows have gotten bigger. We are producing more beef with fewer mother cows than we did 40 years ago. We have made tremendous progress in our ability to genetically select better-gaining, heavier-muscled, bigger-boned sires. On the whole, this is an improvement of beef production efficiency.

The problem is that over the same time frame we also kept daughters (replacement heifers) out of these same superior sires. Individually, these bigger cows are definitely less efficient because they require more nutrition for maintenance, which reduces the carrying capacity of any particular pasture and increases other input costs (supplement hay and/or protein) associated with cow maintenance. In areas of the country that receive limited rainfall, the reduced production efficiency of larger-framed cows may be a limiting factor to profitable cattle production. In higher rainfall environments, however, mature cow size may not be such a limiting factor if managed properly.

Let's look at two projections that will affect the future of beef cattle production: 1) world population will increase from the current 7 billion to 9 billion by 2050, and 2) acres of agricultural land will decrease. Thus, if we are supposed to produce more beef on fewer acres, then larger cows on well-managed acres may be part of the solution, at least in some parts of the United States.

If the increase in world population is paralleled with increased red meat demand, along with less grazing land, commercial cow-calf production will have to be intensified. Intensification of beef production has been reported to include increased fertilization, supplementation or feeding more hay. But is this sustainable? Not likely, given the costs associated with feed, fuel and fertilizer.

Integrating multiple forage management strategies and technologies are the only sustainable means to increase ranch carrying capacity and stocking rates, which can, in part, compensate for the increase in cow size. Forage management strategies such as targeted fertilization, stockpiling warm-season grasses to be grazed October through December, and planting cool-season forages when economically feasible and when there is high potential for predicted moisture are all components of an intensified beef production system. Improved grazing management by incorporating rotational grazing to improve harvest efficiency and plant and soil health, using modern forage genetics with better yields, nutrition and persistence and overlapping the calving season with periods of predictable green grass are also necessary components to sustainable, intensified beef cattle production.

The bottom line is that the efficiency of commercial beef cattle production should be evaluated on pounds of weaned calf produced per acre and pounds of calf weaned produced per cow body weight at weaning, regardless of cow size, to truly monitor and improve overall production efficiency in a sustainable way. As we progress towards 2050, it is my opinion that beef cattle producers that reside in states that border the Gulf of Mexico will play a key role in providing beef to the United States and the world. These cattle producers will need to be good stewards of the land and good stewards of American breed-type cattle that will provide the necessary genetics for sustainable beef production in this unique environment that is conducive to intensified beef cattle production. 🐄



JUNIOR LETTER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

summer days sitting in tanks and other cooling devices, Santa Gertrudis are out grazing and thriving in their environment. Personally, I have owned a variety of different breeds, and Gerts are by far the easiest to keep in all climate conditions.

I hope everyone enjoyed their time at Nationals this year. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting all of you and can't wait for next year's Nationals. Thank you for letting me advocate for this amazing breed that we call Santa Gertrudis. 🐄

LA CAMPANA RANCH

COMMERCIAL *AND* PUREBRED SANTA GERTRUDIS

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COMMERCIAL PRODUCERS CAN USE CROSSBREEDING TO IMPROVE

PROFIT, ADAPTABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

Part I

By Bob Weaver, Ph.D., Cow-Calf Extension Specialist, Kansas State University



Bob Weaver, Ph.D.

The dramatic changes and volatility of cow-calf production system input costs and calf values have many producers wondering about the value of heterosis in today's beef industry pricing structure. Many producers are seeking ways to improve cow-calf production efficiency and profitability. Profitability may be enhanced by increasing the volume of production (i.e., the pounds of calves you market) and/or the value of products you sell (improving quality). The reduction of production costs, and thus break-even prices, can also improve profitability. Better yet, improving the input:output ratio should enhance profit. Moreover, the improvement of production efficiency from crossbreeding improves beef's sustainability.

A variety of production metrics and sustainability measures benefit producers by producing more head and pounds of beef per unit of land area or calories consumed at the enterprise level. Positive changes in cow longevity, reproductive rate and calf performance from heterosis effectively reduces the maintenance energy requirements per pound of beef produced. Dilution of maintenance costs of the cowherd improves sustainability in both the environmental (through more efficient land use) and profitability areas.

For commercial beef producers, the implementation of technologies and breeding systems that increase the quality and volume of production and reduce input costs is essential to maintain or improve the competitive position of the operation. Some producers are thinking of establishing a more

conventional straight-breeding system to improve end product value traits and want to understand the value they are giving up as they sacrifice heterosis, while other producers are considering the establishment of a planned crossbreeding system to capture the value of hybrid vigor. Either way, to make an informed decision, producers need to know the value generated in their herd by heterosis or hybrid vigor.

To fully understand the trade-offs, it is essential to know what it is you sell and how you sell it. The lure of premiums for high-quality beef carcasses is appealing; it gets a great deal of trade publication promotion and it can be profitable. No doubt growing the topline of the beef value chain and satisfying customers is important. That said, if you are a producer who sells calves at weaning, you have very limited opportunity to capture the value of selection pressure you place on end product quality at the expense of other traits or loss in heterosis. It is also true that even if you own the cattle to harvest and are paid on a grid, you only get a fraction of the value of the improvement, albeit bigger than the calf premium. Conversely, the value of heterosis affects every cow in your outfit and it is value that you can capture every year no matter how you sell calves. More importantly, it's not a \$20, \$40 or \$60 premium per head you might get for selling calves or carcasses – the heterosis premium is much, much more.

Why crossbreed?

The use of crossbreeding offers two distinct and important advantages over

the use of a single breed. First, crossbred animals have heterosis or hybrid vigor. Second, crossbred animals combine the strengths of the parent breeds. The term 'breed complementarity' is often used to describe breed combinations that produce highly desirable progeny for a broad range of traits.

What is heterosis?

Heterosis refers to the superiority of the crossbred animal relative to the average of its straight-bred parents. Heterosis results from the increase in the heterozygosity of a crossbred animal's genetic makeup. Heterozygosity refers to a state in which an animal has two different forms of a gene. It is believed that heterosis is the result of gene dominance and the recovery from accumulated inbreeding depression of pure breeds. Heterosis is, therefore, dependent on an animal having two different copies of a gene. The level of heterozygosity an animal has depends on the random inheritance of copies of genes from its parents. In general, animals that are crosses of unrelated breeds, such as Angus and Brahman, exhibit higher levels of heterosis, due to more heterozygosity, than do crosses of more genetically similar breeds such as a cross of Angus and Hereford. Inclusion of a *Bos indicus* fraction in a crossbreeding system generates about three-fold as much heterosis for some traits as does a comparative *Bos taurus* breed.

Heterosis generates the largest improvement in lowly heritable traits.

Moderate improvements due to heterosis are seen in moderately heritable traits. Little or no heterosis is observed in highly heritable traits. Heritability is the proportion of the observable variation in a trait between animals that is due to the genetics that are passed between generations and the variation observed in the animal's phenotypes, which are the result of genetic and environmental effects. Traits such as reproduction and longevity have low heritability. These traits respond very slowly to selection, since a large portion of the variation observed in them is due to environmental factors and a small percentage is due to genetic differences. Heterosis generated through crossbreeding can significantly improve an animal's performance for lowly heritable traits. Crossbreeding has been shown to be an efficient method to improve reproductive efficiency and productivity in beef cattle.

Improvements in cow-calf production due to heterosis are attributable to having both a crossbred cow and a crossbred calf. Crossbred animals that have increased heterozygosity (resulting from genetic content from two or more breeds) have been demonstrated to have better fitness (or ability to reproduce) across environments. In

fact, the heterosis effects grow in magnitude as the environment becomes more harsh. The increased genetic diversity crossbred animals possess allows them to perform better across a wider range of environments. Heterosis effects tend to get larger as the environment becomes more challenging. So, the advantage or benefit of crossbred animals grows as the production environment becomes increasingly harsh.

The two tables following detail the individual (crossbred calf) and maternal (crossbred cow) heterosis observed for various important production traits. These heterosis estimates are adapted from a report by Franke and others, 2001 and 2005, and summarize crossbreeding experiments conducted in the Southeastern United States.

TABLE 1. Units and percentage of heterosis by trait for *Bos taurus* by *Bos indicus* crossbred calves.¹

TRAIT	HETEROSIS UNITS
Calving Rate, % ¹	4.3
Calving Assistance, % ¹	4.9
Calf Survival, % ¹	-1.4
Weaning Rate, % ¹	1.8
Birth Weight, lb. ¹	11.4
Weaning Weight, lb. ¹	78.5

¹ Adapted from Franke et al. 2005; numeric average of Angus-Brahman, Brahman-Charolais and Brahman-Hereford heterosis estimates.

Why is it so important to have crossbred cows?

The production of crossbred calves yields advantages in both heterosis and the blending of desirable traits from two or more breeds. However, the largest economic benefit of crossbreeding to commercial producers comes from having crossbred cows. Maternal heterosis improves the environment a cow provides for her calf as well as the longevity and durability of the cow. The improvement of the maternal environment a cow provides for her calf is manifested in the improvements in calf survivability to weaning and increased weaning weight. Crossbred cows exhibit improvements in calving rate of nearly 15 percent (Table 2) and an increase in longevity. Heterosis results in an increase in weaning weight per cow exposed by more than 30 percent (Table 2) for crossbred *Bos taurus* by *Bos indicus* cows. Crossbreeding can have positive effects on an operation's bottom line by not only increasing the quality and gross payweight of calves produced but also by increasing the durability and productivity of the cow factory. Crossbred cows may be the only free lunch in the world.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 ►



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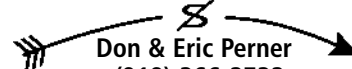
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CROSSBREEDING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13



Photo courtesy WR Ranch, Bosque, N.M.

The effects of maternal heterosis on the economic measures of cow-calf production have been shown to be very positive. Scientists have understood the value of heterosis for some time. Using prices from the 1990s, the added value of maternal heterosis ranges from approximately \$50/cow/year to nearly \$100/cow/year, depending on the amount of maternal heterosis retained in the cowherd (Ritchie, 1998). Mater-

nal heterosis accounted for an increase in net profit per cow of nearly \$75/cow/year (Davis et al., 1994). The results suggested that the benefits of maternal heterosis on profit were primarily the reduced cost per cow exposed. Crossbred cows had higher reproductive rates and longer productive lives and required fewer replacements than straightbred cows in their study. All of these factors contribute to reduced cost per cow exposed. Further, researchers found increased outputs, including growth and milk yield, were offset by increased costs.

TABLE 2. Units and percentage of heterosis by trait for *Bos taurus* by *Bos indicus* crossbred dams.^{1,2}

TRAIT	HETEROSIS UNITS	%
Calving Rate, % ¹	15.4	--
Calving Assistance Rate, % ¹	-6.6	--
Calf Survival, % ¹	8.2	--
Weaning Rate, % ¹	20.8	--
Birth Weight, lb. ¹	-2.4	--
Weaning Weight, lb. ¹	3.2	--
Weaning Wt. per Cow Exposed, lb. ²	91.7	31.6

¹ Adapted from Franke et al. 2005; numeric average of Angus-Brahman, Brahman-Charolais and Brahman-Hereford heterosis estimates.

² Adapted from Franke et al. 2001.

A variety of crossbreeding systems yield 20-30 percent improvements in weaning weight per cow exposed, not including the additional value generated through sire selection within breed. This represents a substantial change in output given relatively constant input. Simple examples using current calf pricing and a conservative 23 percent increase in weaning weight per cow exposed using a terminal sire/F1 (two cross) cow can generate approximately \$150 of additional revenue per cow per year. I'm not aware of any set of calves that have generated carcass premiums of \$150 per cow exposed regardless of breed or grid. In today's calf prices, the value of heterosis for a herd of 100 cows is roughly \$15,000 per year and represents a decrease in break-even costs of more than \$28 per hundred-weight on 600-pound calves. 🐄

Editor's Note: The second portion of Weaber's article will appear in the August issue of SG-USA and will discuss breed complementarity and keys to successful crossbreeding programs.

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Grazing Management to Improve Long-Term Dietary Intake

Livestock performance is determined by the quantity and quality of forage animals consume each day.

The amount of plant material in the pasture is important, as well as the species composition, plant maturity, proportion of leaves to stems and the density and placement of palatable and nutritious plant species among less-palatable ones.

By Tim Steffens, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Rangeland Resource Management,
West Texas A&M University

Since a cow has only a limited time (generally 8-10 hours per day) to take in enough grazing to meet nutrient requirements, it needs enough herbage density to optimize bite size, and those bites need to be close enough together that the cow doesn't have to use much time searching for good plants to eat. In order to achieve those objectives, plants need to be defoliated relatively evenly (while still allowing animals to mix plants of different quality in ways that allow them to meet performance goals) over as little time as possible. Plants then need enough time to regrow a full array of leaves before being clipped again.

Cattle generally prefer green to brown vegetation, leaf to stem and immature plants to more mature plants. Generally, cool-season grasses are higher quality than warm-season grasses at a given stage of maturity. Optimum growth conditions vary among plant species, so a wide variety of palatable plants in a pasture increases the probability of having something that can respond to rainfall over the entire growing season and have enough young, leafy vegetation to provide a high-quality diet over a longer period of time. Tropical grasses (e.g., bahia, bermuda, kleingrass, buffelgrass, old-world bluestems, etc.), characteristic of much of the hot, humid country where *Bos indicus* cattle are raised, are often very productive. However, they are also notorious for their relatively low quality and rapid loss of quality as they mature, due to increasing proportion of stem compared to leaf and lower cell-wall digestibility as they mature. To complicate things even further, the better the growing conditions, the more quickly the plant matures, increasing the rate at which forage quality deteriorates. So, keeping these species as leafy as possible without becoming too mature is essential, but grazing them too heavily or too often will hurt their productivity and survival.

Forbs are broad-leafed, non-woody species, often referred to as weeds. Some may be unpalatable or even toxic, but as a general rule, forbs are higher in protein, though often lower in energy than grasses. Many are, therefore, a valuable addition to the plant community at certain times of the year. So grasses can be thought of as the "potatoes," with palatable forbs often being the "meat" in a cow's diet. Mixing cool- and warm-season grasses at the optimum stage of maturity with palatable forbs allows animals to select a diet to meet their requirements while making fuller use of more plants on the landscape. By maintaining vigor and reproductive capacity

of palatable species, we can help decrease the opportunity for unpalatable species to invade.

In the short term, the easiest way to allow cattle to select an optimum diet is to continuously allow them access to a large area and stock conservatively so there is always plenty for them to eat. However, when a plant is grazed, subsequent regrowth is less mature and more palatable than the same species that was not grazed. The problem with continuous stocking is that livestock may repeatedly graze preferred plants in preferred areas while ignoring potentially acceptable plants that became too mature. This weakens the plants that are repeatedly defoliated compared to their neighbors, and makes them less productive and less competitive with their neighbors. These degraded areas become focal points of degradation that increase in size over time, resulting in higher and repeated costs for pasture renovations and/or decreased carrying capacity or animal performance over the long term. Remember, repeated corrective measures often indicate an opportunity for management to have an effect at little or no cash cost. When using herbicides, we *may* unintentionally kill some palatable forbs that could contribute to a high-quality forage base.

Both grasses and forbs are sensitive to repeated defoliation without adequate regrowth, opening the way for less palatable and even poisonous plants to come into the pasture over time. If allowed to graze only the plants they like, and access those plants over long periods of time, animals will repeatedly graze the regrowth of previously defoliated plants, depressing the productivity of those plants. Meanwhile, ungrazed plants continue to increase the proportion of stem, lignin and cell wall, which further decreases their quality and palatability compared to the regrowth, increasing the likelihood that previously grazed plants will be overgrazed.

To maintain vigor and reproductive capacity of preferred plants, we have to control the frequency, timing, distribution and intensity of defoliation and provide enough opportunity for plants to regrow between grazing periods. These are achieved by sufficiently controlling when, where, how many, how long and how often animals are on different parts of the landscape, so that preferred plants in preferred areas can maintain themselves while allowing animals enough selectivity for adequate performance. Our goal is to increase the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19 »

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GRAZING MANAGEMENT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

frequency and productivity of a variety of palatable plants so that quality is maintained over a longer period of time. If done properly, livestock more equitably distributed over the landscape over time are encouraged to select a wider array of plants so that intake is optimized.

Proper stocking rate is critical. When overstocked, animal performance will suffer. You will also leave insufficient cover after a grazing period for quick regrowth and soil protection to enhance water infiltration and decrease evaporation. However, other management considerations besides stocking rate are also necessary to successfully manage diet quality and intake.

Enough pastures per herd will be needed to allow enough recovery of defoliated plants between grazing periods. Shorter grazing periods at higher livestock densities will also encourage livestock to sample a wider variety of plants and minimize the likelihood of plants receiving a second bite during the grazing period. The grazing period should be determined by the needed recovery period and number of pastures per herd, not the other way around. To plan for enough recovery, a common rule of thumb is to ask how often a hay field should be cut under optimum growing conditions. The most common answer to that question is 25-35 days. Then ask how long you would need to get that much growth under your normal environmental conditions. You should plan for at least that long between grazing periods.

A common misconception is that the goal of this type of grazing management FORCES cattle to eat almost EVERY-

THING. While that is possible, animal performance will suffer under that kind of management. Pastures should provide enough variety to allow adequate intake and quality. Forage depletion will be faster because of higher animal density, but you can stop grazing any time. If cattle consume lower quality forages soon enough, the combination of lower and higher quality plants can still provide an adequate diet. Problems arise when decreases in quality occur over an extended period – highs are higher, but lows are lower and longer – with low-quality diets often not meeting desired performance goals.

By managing for species diversity, high proportions of leaf and dense plant cover through correct control of when, where, how many, how long and how often animals are on a given part of the landscape, we can optimize animal performance and decrease input costs. 🌱



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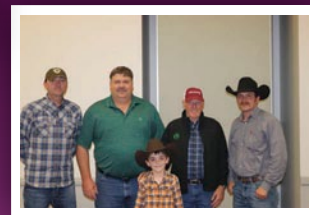
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Planning Required to Overcome Heat Stress

Megan Rolf, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of
Animal Sciences and Industry, Kansas State University

AS SUMMER APPROACHES AND TEMPERATURES RISE, most people begin to envision a beach vacation, a mountain retreat or other locations that offer an opportunity to “cool down.” But as cattle producers, our thoughts often go in another direction: How will our cattle fare in the hot summer weather? At this point, we are already too late to offer our herds much relief if we haven’t made an effective plan to mitigate heat stress. Mitigation of heat stress can encompass many different strategies from management to genetics, but all require adequate planning. Now is the time to begin planning for next summer’s long, hot, sultry days.

The cost of heat stress to the beef industry is estimated to be in the millions of dollars annually. Although heat stress affects the bottom line, producers are well aware that it also impacts the well-being of our cattle. Not only does the welfare of our cattle impact us economically, planning ahead for heat stress mitigation is a very positive way

to demonstrate how we care for our herds. Heat stress results when animals can’t dissipate enough heat to offset the heat produced in their rumen and heat from the environment. All of this culminates in an inability to maintain normal body temperature, known as thermoregulation. Cattle often have the most difficult time dissipating heat when both the temperature and humidity are high, and this is exacerbated when nighttime temperatures fail to drop significantly.

Risk Factors

There are a multitude of risk factors that can contribute to heat stress. Coat color is the most often cited risk because cattle with darker hide and skin color absorb more solar radiation and reflect less sunlight. Thus, animals with black hides typically spend significantly more time in the shade. In addition, cattle with dark hides are 25 percent more stressed at temperatures above 25 degrees Celsius, when compared to light-hided cattle. Cattle with a history

of respiratory pneumonia, increased fat cover and poor temperament also have increased risk of heat stress.

Genetics

One obvious way to manage heat stress through genetics is to target coat color in the cowherd in an effort to reduce the number of animals with darker coat colors. The second avenue is the use of germplasm from tropically adapted cattle, such as Brahman. The amount of adapted-breed germplasm can be introduced or managed through the use of composite breeds that have tropically-adapted ancestry, such as Santa Gertrudis. While the optimum fraction of adapted-breed germplasm is likely different in every operation, use of these breeds does provide an opportunity to quickly increase the level of heat tolerance in a herd. One final way to use genetics to combat heat stress is to select for traits that influence thermotolerance, such as temperament and health (as mentioned above) and/or hair shedding. Several studies in the past few years have shown that hair shedding is a heritable trait that confers a production advantage to those cows that shed their winter coat earlier. Hair-shedding phenotypes can be easily recorded early in the summer and animals that shed their hair coat earlier can be favored in selection decisions.

As with all selection decisions, regardless of the trait, making changes in one trait can cause unintended changes in other traits due to genetic antagonisms. Antagonisms between heat tolerance and production traits have not been thoroughly researched in beef cattle. However, research done in the dairy industry would suggest that there are likely genetic correlations between thermotolerance and a variety of production traits, such as fertility and milk production. As thermotolerance and heat stress have continued to receive attention in the beef industry, new tools should be forthcoming in the next few years that will enable producers to place even more emphasis on thermotolerance (if it is important in their breeding goals) while avoiding negative impacts of genetic antagonisms.

Management

The key to making management interventions is to intervene before the onset of heat stress. Make a habit of using readily available weather forecasts, especially when combined with heat stress decision support tools, such as the National Cattle Comfort Advisor

(Figure 1), to plan ahead for conditions likely to result in significant heat stress. When heat stress is likely to occur, consider the following management interventions, keeping in mind that most of these must be planned for in advance:

★ **Shade:** Shade reduces solar radiation and radiant heat load. Shading feed and water locations can also be a mitigation strategy.

★ **Air flow:** Air flow can aid evaporative cooling, but should also be considered around feed and water sources, shade sources or anywhere that animals congregate within limited space, because overcrowding in those spaces can interfere with the beneficial effects of air flow.

★ **Water:** Availability of high-quality drinking water is crucial during hot weather. Bunk space requirements for water can increase by a factor of 3 during extreme heat. Shaded water can also be beneficial because increased water temperature has been associated with decreased performance and lack of ability to thermoregulate.

★ **Transportation and Processing:**

Transportation and processing of animals during extreme periods of heat should be avoided if possible. If

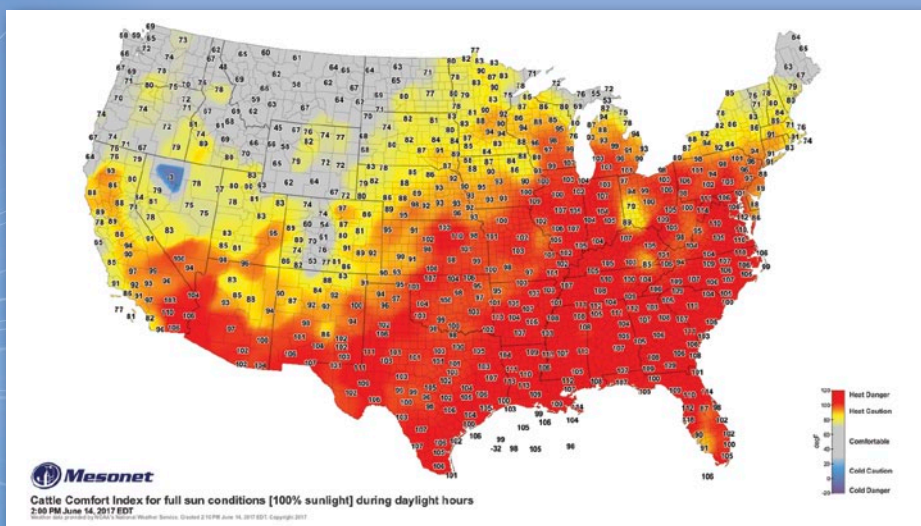


Figure 1: National Cattle Comfort Map for June 8, 2017. Cattle comfort indexes are reflective of a sunny day (100 percent solar radiation) with current weather conditions. Source: cattlecomfort.mesonet.us

it cannot be avoided, processing and transportation of cattle early in the morning or late in the evening can assist with heat stress mitigation. Animals should not remain in stationary trailers for long periods of time.

Heat stress is an important issue in the beef industry that impacts both profitability and animal well-being. Because both genetics and environ-

ment play a role in the performance of an animal, it is essential to consider both factors in heat stress planning and mitigation. Being prepared to address these issues in your herd can yield many dividends. By developing your heat stress mitigation strategies before you need to use them, you can achieve optimum performance and enhance the well-being of your cattle herd. 🐄



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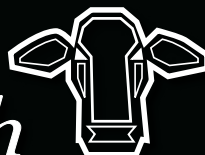
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