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The Beef Industry Cannot Afford To Continue To Ignore Increased Profitability Through A Planned Crossbreeding Program

According to data presented by Dr. David Lalman, Oklahoma State University and Dr. Stan Beavers, Texas A&M University, three primary drivers of ranching profitability (weaning weight, pregnancy rate and pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed to the bull) are either static or in decline in our national cow herd. Why? In many cases it's quite simple; in general the beef industry has chosen to ignore the concept of heterosis or hybrid vigor and what a "planned crossbreeding program" can contribute to profitability. One of the first to sound alarm was Dr. Barry Dunn, now Dean of Agriculture at South Dakota State University, when analyzing herd data from SD, MT, WY and MN several years ago. He found almost a 70 pound decrease in calf weaning weight per cow in the breeding pasture over the years analyzed, which is just about what would be predicted if you converted crossbred cow herds to primarily straight bred cows.

"Implementation of technologies and systems that both reduce costs and enhance profitability is essential", says Dr. Scott Greiner of VPI. The improvements in profitability through a "planned crossbreeding program" designed to maximize heterosis are nothing short of amazing. At least a 20% increase in pounds of calf weaned, a cow herd that averages a 1 and 1/3 year longer productive life and about 30% more in lifetime productivity, all contributing to either reducing costs or increasing output.

Recently research projects coming from USDA-MARC, Clay Center, NE have reestablished an interest in utilizing Bos Indicus genetics. MARC data has indicated that all the benefits of crossbreeding with Bos Taurus X Bos Taurus (British and Continental Breeds) are about doubled when Bos Taurus breeds are crossed with Bos Indicus breeds. The Bos Indicus

crossbred cow (one example is Brangus X Hereford) has increased heat tolerance, increased resistance to Fescue Toxicosis, increased disease and parasite resistance, increased hardiness, increased foraging ability, increased fertility, heavier weaning weights and decreased maintenance costs over the straight bred cow of either breed.. Additionally, with Brangus you can keep all calves black or red depending on your preference.

The simplest plan is a two breed rotational crossbreeding system. Let's use an example where Brangus bulls would be bred to Hereford cows. The resulting $\frac{1}{2}$ Brangus X $\frac{1}{2}$ Hereford heifers could then be bred to Brangus bulls generating a $\frac{3}{4}$ Brangus X $\frac{1}{4}$ Hereford female. That female would be bred to Hereford bulls resulting in $\frac{3}{8}$ Brangus X $\frac{5}{8}$ Hereford offspring. Using those two breeds would involve always breeding females to the breed of sire not the sire breed of her dam. Simple, requires only two breeding pastures and will generate 67% of the maximum heterosis resulting from much more complex and hard to implement systems. It's not that difficult. You just have to have a plan and stick to that plan long enough to generate the crossbred cows and increased profits that accompany the program.

" I know that two and two make four -- and should be glad to prove it too if I could -- though I must say if by any sort of process I could convert two and two into five it would give me much greater pleasure." George Gordon Brown. Crossbreeding is just the system Dr. Brown was searching for to make two plus two equal five! All other meat producing animal systems use very well planned crossbreeding programs. Can the beef industry, and more importantly, individual beef producers continue to ignore the value of heterosis and survive? Probably not.

The 2013 SPITZER RANCH PROFESSIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BRANGUS BULL SALE and CUSTOMER COMMERCIAL BRANGUS FEMALE SALE are scheduled for Saturday, February 23, 2013. You are invited to investigate their program and learn how SPITZER RANCH Brangus genetics can produce crossbred females that will increase the

profitability of your cow herd. They extend you a personal invitation to have your name added to their mailing list. Just call 864/972-9140, write SPITZER RANCH, 1511 HWY 59, Fair Play, SC, 29643 or send an email note to spitzeranch@mindspring.com. Be sure to visit them at www.srbulls.com and follow their posts and QUOTE OF THE WEEK on Facebook.

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