

For Immediate Release
FAIR PLAY, SC
June 3, 2014

Contact: Doc or Patricia Spitzer
spitzeranch@mindspring.com or
(864)972-9140 or (864)710-0257

A Genetic Management Plan For Your Commercial Beef Herd: Part 2

Last month we defined SELECTION and INBREEDING which are the only two tools Purebred Seedstock Breeders have available to change the genetics in their cow herds. We also defined HETEROSIS (also called Hybrid Vigor) and COMPLIMENTARITY which are additional tools for genetic change available to commercial cattlemen generally not available to Seedstock Breeders. This is not quite that simple as Composite Breeds have been and are being created that use both heterosis and complimentarity in formation of those composites. However, unless one is continually creating first generation (F1) composites the amount of heterosis declines with successive generations of *interse mating*. That is if one breeds ½ bloods to ½ bloods, heterosis declines and one is well on the way to creating another breed. Please remember that God did not create breeds, man did; and man pretty well defines breeds as he decides. That discussion is far beyond the simple concepts of Heterosis and Complimentarity used for this article.

As a commercial beef producer developing a crossbred cow herd you are obviously not using Inbreeding in your herd and the absolute most important Selection decision you will make is where you will buy your bulls. In fact, the genetic selection decisions made by your bull supplier are much more important than what you can do within your individual herd for several reasons.

First in commercial beef herds most of the time is spent culling individual cows (deciding who will never again be a mother on your place) against certain disadvantageous traits. Poor fertility being primary, but bad disposition, poor mothering ability, bad udders, bad feet and the list of convenience traits you cull against goes on and on. By the time you remove cows needing

culled for one reason or another there is not much room left to select superior cows. In essence you use the genetics you purchase in the form of your bulls to create them.

Second the bulls you buy can sire many more calves each year than an individual cow will have in her entire life so the genetics from that bull are spread throughout the herd as you keep his daughters. Have you ever thought that you are INHERITING (so to speak) all the good and bad genetic decisions your bull supplier has made in his Seedstock herd?

A quick example: If you have a very short breeding season for yearling heifers, expect them to calve as two-year-olds and have a reasonably short breeding season for the cow herd and cull all open females every year, you are intensely selecting for fertility. What if the outfit that you buy bulls from does not select that hard for fertility? You are then going backwards - fast. Even worse, what if your bull supplier has two calving seasons; not to have two marketing programs which may be appropriate, but to be able to "slide" open cows from spring calving to fall calving and back again. How do the females sired by bulls from that program affect your herd's fertility? Quick Tip: Look in the bull sale catalog for the age of the cow when that bull was born and how many calves she has had. If she calved as she should as a two-year-old, she should have had one less calf than her age (simple - if 3 she should have 2 calves and if 10 she should have 9 calves). If not, is there a valid reason you can live with?

Then does your bull supplier select for the economically relevant traits appropriate for your herd. Traits like selecting for an appropriate size (not too big or too small) of a calf at birth, an appropriate level of milk production for the environment and all the early growth possible. This Selection decision of where to buy your bulls is critical since for the commercial cow operation your profit depends on three things: 1 - every cow has a calf, 2 - every calf is born alive and vigorous, and 3 - every calf grows fast. All other traits we so often talk about take second place (or maybe 9th or 10th place) after these three. And we have not yet begun to talk

about breed of bulls purchased which will be discussed next month when we address Complimentarity and Heterosis. Just like Seedstock Producers, Commercial Cattlemen need a Genetic Management Plan to increase productivity in their commercial cow herds. Part 3 of this discussion will continue next month with examples of how these genetic management tools are being put to work by Professional Cattlemen across the US. Those folks are students of beef production and make decisions that increase profitability.

Please consider making attendance at the 2015 SPITZER RANCH PROFESSIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BULL SALE set for **Saturday, February 28, 2015** a priority. The Spitzers will publish both a SUMMER 2014 NEWSLETTER and a WINTER 2015 NEWSLETTER. If you wish your name added to their mailing list for Newsletters and a Bull Sale Catalog call 864/972-9140, write SPITZER RANCH, 1511 HWY 59, Fair Play, SC, 29643 or send an email note to spitzeranch@mindspring.com. Be certain to visit their WEB SITE at www.srbulls.com where you can study their philosophy of serving the commercial cattle industry, view catalogs from previous years Bull Sales and inspect the data they provide for your genetic selection decisions. You might additionally enjoy joining over 1150 followers of their QUOTE OF THE WEEK on Facebook.

END