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

## **A Genetic Management Plan For Your Commercial Beef Herd: Part 1**

Seedstock breeders who are supplying bulls for use in your commercial cow herd spend many hours planning a specific genetic mating program to produce the next generation of cows to become mothers and bulls to sell. Importantly, if your seedstock supplier does not have a Genetic Management Plan, you need to find a different source for your herd bulls. Seedstock breeders of any breed have only two tools to make their cattle better and more predictable and those are SELECTION and INBREEDING. **Selection** is simply choosing as parents those bulls of superior estimated genetic merit for economically relevant traits desired in the next generation of calves, and just as important, rejecting other bulls that don't measure up. **Inbreeding** is mating bulls and cows that are more closely related than the average for that breed. If done correctly and in moderation **Inbreeding** decreases genetic variation and increases prepotency for simply inherited traits and highly heritable traits.

“By using a program provided by the Brangus Association we can breed bulls to cows “on paper” and have projected EPDs and percent inbreeding values before we do it for real”, says Doc Spitzer of Spitzer Ranch. “We use due diligence by only using high accuracy, proven bulls as potential AI sires. Many of those bulls have hundreds of calves reported to the Brangus Association. Not only are these high accuracy EPDs very reliable, but any structural problems or abnormalities transmitted by these bulls have been discovered before we use the semen.” “Searching the Brangus Database for high accuracy, curve bender bulls we can use in our program and then test mating “on paper” takes hours and hours of homework, but we make fewer genetic mistakes that way”, he concludes.

Commercial cattlemen on the other hand must use SELECTION, but also have the tools

of HETEROSIS and COMPLIMENTARITY to increase beef herd productivity. **Heterosis** (hybrid vigor) is the increase in performance for a trait in crossbred calves that exceeds the average performance of the purebred parents that were mated to produce that particular crossbred calf. That is the scientific definition, but that increased performance needs to be greater than the performance of the best parent to really be useful in commercial beef production. **Complimentarity** is the combining of specific breeds chosen to have characteristics (traits) that complement each other, thereby obtaining optimum progeny. *{All bolded definitions are paraphrased from: Guidelines For Uniform Beef Improvement Programs, Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) which is available as a free download from [www.beefimprovement.org](http://www.beefimprovement.org).}*

If a genetic management plan is followed the outcome will obviously lead to a more optimum and much more profitable beef production. If you buy your bulls from the right seedstock producer, use logical crossbreeding programs and select breeds that complement each other, your herd will be more productive in many areas than that of your bull supplier. “Many of the commercial herds we have worked with for several years have crossbred steers with heavier actual weaning weights than our bulls. And, if they are using all available tools to increase weaning weights - they should”, say the Spitzers. “A commercial beef producer using our bulls gets the benefit of 32 years of genetic selection for economically important traits. Then if they employ a sound, complimentary crossbreeding program and all other available technology, they are well on the way to increased profitability.”

Just like Seedstock Producers, Commercial Cattlemen need a Genetic Management Plan to increase productivity in their commercial cow herds. Part 2 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 mark your calendar for the 2015 SPITZER RANCH PROFESSIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BULL SALE set for **Saturday, February 28, 2015**. 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/or 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](mailto:spitzeranch@mindspring.com). Also be certain to visit their WEB SITE at [www.srbulls.com](http://www.srbulls.com) and you might enjoy joining over 1100 followers of their QUOTE OF THE WEEK on Facebook.

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