

Think Hybrid Kick, Think Efficiency



A Hereford bull mated to an Angus cow creates one of the most coveted products of the cattle industry. Complementary breeds, combined with the effects of heterosis, produce a true performance animal both in the feedlot and on the range. “Hereford-Angus crosses have a longer herd life and greater lifetime production than straightbreds of either parent breed,” notes the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (MARC).

Astute cattlemen agree that carefully planned crossbreeding is one of the best tools in the industry for increasing operational efficiency. The opportunities to capitalize on complementary breeds and to make genetic improvement in lowly heritable traits through “heterosis” or “hybrid vigor” cannot be denied.

Research and experience show that crossbred calves stand and nurse earlier and are more resistant to stresses such as scours and chills. A long-term U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) heterosis project noted that weaning weight per cow exposed increased 8.5% by raising crossbred versus straightbred calves.

If you plan to take advantage of the benefits of careful crossbreeding, consider Herefords. MARC research explains that due to Hereford purity,

heterosis is greater in whiteface crosses than with many other *Bos taurus* breeds. In addition, Herefords contribute several traits that can help reduce input costs, including conversion, hardiness, fertility, longevity and disposition. Although each of these efficiency traits is critical to profitability and a mainstay of the Hereford breed, it is conversion that has come to the forefront due to the overwhelming feed costs producers have battled in the year past.

The efficiency experts

Hereford breeders throughout time have bred feed efficiency into their herds. Expected to do more with less — or be

sent down the road — Herefords have naturally excelled in converting grass and grain into dollars of profit.

So, as the tools become available to scientifically measure feed efficiency, it’s no surprise that Hereford is leading the charge. The American Hereford Association is pursuing genetic progress through a feed efficiency trial at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Monty Kerley, Missouri animal scientist and professor, is utilizing Hereford cows in a study designed to explore the possibilities and effects of selecting for feed efficiency.

Kerley gives this example of how efficiency can dramatically affect production economics: In a project at the University of Missouri Beef Research and Teaching Farm, the most efficient calf in the feedlot consumed \$92 less feed than the most inefficient calf (\$145 per ton of diet estimate) to the same amount of gain.

“The potential for improvement in feed efficiency can be greater than the potential profit margin of feeding the calf,” Kerley says. Of course, efficiency isn’t only important in the feedlot. It’s important to all aspects of cattle production.

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— Monty Kerley, University of Missouri-Columbia

As you look to the next breeding season, consider buying a Hereford bull. The baldie is testament to Hereford-influenced efficiency and the powerful effects of heterosis. Visit www.hereford.org or call (816) 842-3757 to find out how the whiteface can work for you.

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