

More Meat From Crossbred Cattle

Crossbred calves have better weaning records than straightbreds in the first of a three-phase experiment to evaluate crossbred vigor in beef cattle, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports.

The crossbred calves excelled in birth weight, average daily gain, weaning weight at 200 days, and weaning conformation score.

Scientists of USDA's Agricultural Research Service and the Nebraska Agricultural Experiment Station are using Angus, Hereford, and Shorthorn breeds in these studies of heterosis at the Fort Robinson Beef Cattle Research Station.

Bulls of each breed are mated to cows of their own breed as well as to cows of the other two breeds to produce straightbreds and all possible crosses. The effects of heterosis are measured by comparing the average traits of the crossbreds with the average traits of the straightbreds.

In the first phase of the experiment scientists evaluate preweaning and postweaning growth rate, livability of calves, feed efficiency, and carcass traits. Herefords born in the first phase are used in the second phase to measure the effects of heterosis on fertility and mothering ability. In the third phase scientists evaluate procedures to determine which system of cross breeding is most effective for commercial producers.

Cows used in the first phase — 80 of each breed — produced calf crops in 1960

through 1963. In setting up the experiment, the scientists made a deliberate attempt to obtain stock of each breed from several sources. Cows were purchased as calves in 1957 from commercial producers in Nebraska, Montana, and Colorado. Bulls came from breeders' herds and experiment station herds in nine North Central and Western States.

Besides exceeding straightbreds in all preweaning growth traits studied, crossbred calves had better livability, particularly the first few days after birth, and they reached puberty at younger ages. In comparing the crosses, scientists found that increased vigor was greater in the Hereford-Angus and Hereford-Shorthorn crosses than in the Angus-Shorthorn cross.

Studies made so far of postweaning traits — from the 1960-62 calf crops — indicate that crossbreds exceed straightbreds in growth rate. They also have a slight advantage in feed efficiency.

Crossbreds appear to be slightly fatter than straightbreds but there has been no difference in carcass grade. Crossbred carcasses yielded more pounds of edible meat but the percent of boneless round loin, rib and chuck was trimmed retail cuts from the slightly lower than in the straightbred carcasses.

Said the hired man, "I've been with you 25 years, and I've never asked you for a raise before."

Retorted the farmer, "That is why you've been here 25 years!"

Steer Feeders —

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH CATTLE GOING ON FEED

Digestive disorders and a slight transient depression in appetite in newly-arrived cattle in the feedlot have been problems for a number of years. There are numerous causes:



1. The sudden change in type of feed, for example, from grass and milk to grain, silage and/or hay and a protein supplement.
2. Too rapid pushing of grain concentrates.
3. Too much protein.
4. Not enough roughage.
5. Too much high quality roughage.
6. Unpalatable feed.
7. Too much green chopped legume or grass silage.
8. Feeding soft or immature corn. If not moldy, soft corn is satisfactory, but animals must be accustomed to it gradually (Morrison).
9. Too much green chopped corn causing green corn poisoning.
10. Too much silage fed to lighter weight calves. Calves do not have the digestive capacity to obtain their total digestible nutrients from a full feed of silage alone.
11. Digestive disorders caused by infections.
12. In addition, in connection with supplements containing an antibiotic, there is an adjustment of the rumen microflora to the antibiotic. This may cause a slight depression in rumen function and reduce appetite for 24 to 36 hours after the initial feeding. Softer feces also may be noticed. This effect is transient and after 36 to 48 hours the appetite should be restored to normal.

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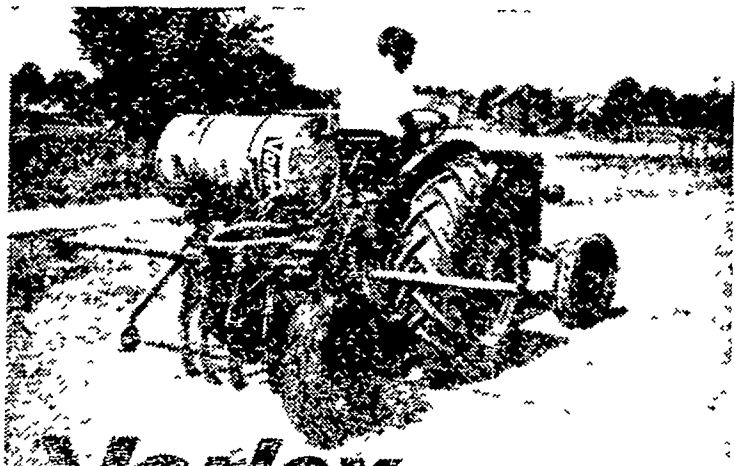


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