

Beef Crossbreeds Becoming More Important

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(Editor's Note: Last week Dr. Lowell L. Wilson, one of the nation's foremost authorities on new beef

crossbreeds, spoke to a joint meeting of the Garden Spot and Ephrata Young Farmers Associations. This article covers the main points of his speech to the group.)

Crossbreeding among well-known beef breeds and "new" breeds will make the next 20 years challenging and interesting!

Preliminary results of Penn State research, to give one example, show one group of steer calves averaged 1110 pounds at 408 days of age.

By well-known breeds we mean Angus, Brahman, Brangus, Charolais, Hereford, Polled Hereford, Santa Gertrudis, and Shorthorn. These have been the main beef cattle breeds in the United States for many years. Some of the dairy breeds like Holstein and Brown Swiss have also been used for beef production but not very often.

The "new" breeds introduced into the United States the past few years are not really new because most are as old or older than the breeds that have been in the United States for many years. We refer to the Limousin, Simmental, Main-Anjou and Chianina.

Many people think we have enough breeds for beef production, but most of the "new" breeds seem to be off to a good start. It will be several years before all the research has been conducted and analyzed to determine the place of each of these new breeds.

Crossbreeding
When we talk about breeds of beef cattle (or hogs or sheep) we have to talk first

about crossbreeding. It has been well established that by using a planned beef crossbreeding program, net profit can be increased about 25 percent. This increased net profit is from using crossbred cows bred to purebred bulls. Most of the improvement is in calving percentages, calf livability and milk production, but growth rate and feed efficiency are also improved.

The main thing to remember in all crossbreeding is to select breeds that complement each other. Two breeds weak in the same economic characteristics—fertility, milking ability or growth rate—should not be crossed. Breeds that cover up each other's weaknesses should be used.

There are many things beef cattle must do in order to make a profit. First, the brood cow must be fertile and milk well. The calves must grow well up to weaning time and continue to grow rapidly and efficiently to slaughter weights. The carcass must be meaty with sufficient quality to meet the consumer's taste. No one breed is the best in all economic traits. This is the primary reason for crossbreeding.

New Breeds
Simmental. Simmentals (dual purpose meat and milk production) originated primarily from Switzerland, but cattle of the same breeding are also in France, Germany and Austria (named Pie Rouge and Fleckvieh). Simmental is one of the oldest known breeds. Research indicates Simmentals may grow as rapidly as Charolais, with comparable mature size and carcass quality.

They are white-faced with solid or spotted red body patterns. Some of the early work at the Meat Animal Research Center, Clay Center, Nebraska, indicated calving difficulty from Simmental and Charolais was similar on Angus and Hereford cows. Preliminary research at Penn State indicates only limited calving difficulties from Simmental bulls on Angus-Holstein crossbred cows.

Limousin. Limousins originated in France, and are noted for desirable muscle thickness, and growth rate which almost equals Charolais. Mature Limousin cows are not as

large as Simmental, Maine Anjou or Charolais. This may be desirable in terms of the amount of feed required to maintain the cows.

Preliminary data from some research stations also indicate Limousin carcass quality may be more [Continued on Page 23]

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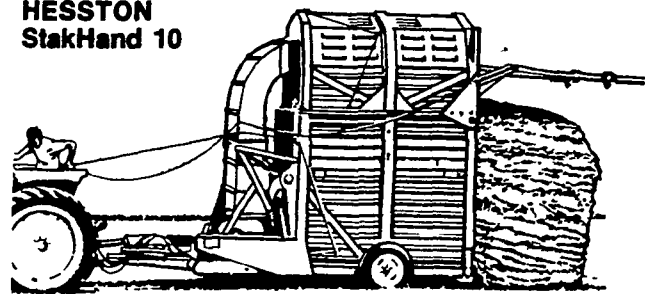
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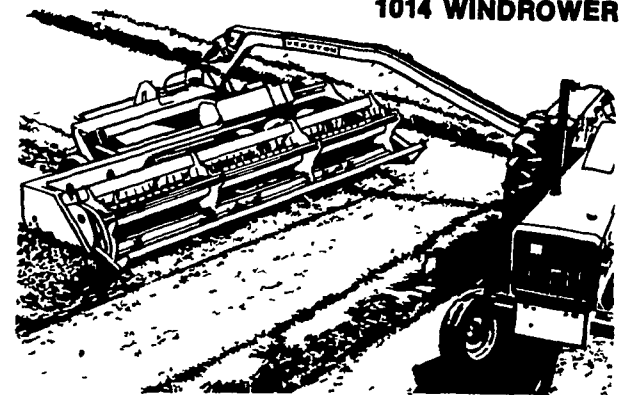
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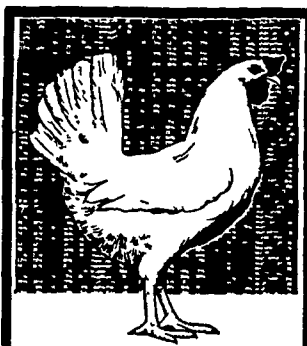


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