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Semex Beef on Dairy: Maximizing Beef Profits from Your Dairy Herd

Just breed it beef and it will be worth more money, is no longer adequate. Semex uses its internal beef genetic development program to produce bulls for use specifically over dairy cows to maximize your profits.

DOUG SAVAGE HAN HOPMAN

'The use of beef on dairy has been through a significant evolution over the years. Originally it was as a clean-up sire, a way to get problem cows pregnant. Breeding a cow to a beef bull meant any beef bull just as long as the semen was cheap. A lot has changed since then,' comments Brad Gilchrist, the global beef supply chain manager at Semex. 'Of course, the rise in use of sexed semen meant that producers could breed all the replacements they needed from their higher genetic merit females, leaving the rest of the herd for producing beef calves. It was the perfect storm because at the same time there was a global shortage of beef and it became a very attractive economic decision to produce quality beef from dairy herds. In addition to fertility and calving-ease, meat yield, marbling and carcass quality became very important traits too. Our program moved in the direction of producing bulls that would excel at producing quality carcasses when used over dairy cows.'

Semex Angus sire Hole In One: Maximizing profits when used over dairy cows.

INTERNAL PROGRAM

Brad goes on to mention that in Canada in 2014, less than 5% of dairy cows were being bred to beef bulls, whereas today it is between 30-35%, with some herds over 50%. 'In fact, there are some herds using 100% beef and then purchasing their herd replacements,' he adds. 'Just breed it beef and it will be worth more money, is no longer adequate. We developed our own internal beef genetic program. We went out and purchased top beef females, and then use our Boviteq technology producing IVF calves from young heifers just as we do for our dairy Progenesis program, creating superior beef genetics specifically to maximize profits when used over dairy cows.'

KEY TRAITS

'Rather than focusing on individual bulls we aim to produce genetics that excel for key traits that will maximize economic return,' Brad continues. Different markets require a different balance of traits. In North America animals are raised on a high starch, high energy diet. In countries such as Argentina and New Zealand, its very much a grass-based production system. For North America, Angus are the top performers with highly marbled, high-quality meat and good calving-ease. Some of the European countries look for early muscle volume with the Belgian Blue in demand. 'The extreme marbling of the Wagyu suits some markets, and we've also developed some breed composite bulls that suit specific markets. We've made it easy for dairy producers to select which group best suits their needs. We have three categories – driver, builder and performer. Our performer group drives the most value through the entire supply chain, ensuring performance and carcass traits are maximized. Our internal program works closely with Vierra Dairy in California on acquiring top genetics and developing calves into industry leading sires used worldwide.'

CONFIDENCE

Genetic evaluation is very important in the marketing of genetics. 'We don't market anything based on internal measurements. It's all 3rd party validated proofs we use. That adds the credibility that it's a fair playing field for everyone. It's taken time for countries to develop comprehensive data collection systems measuring everything from birth weight, survival, calf growth to carcass yield and quality. I think most producers like to see the performance of genetics in their own market under their own conditions. From our perspective, it's important to have results coming back that are close to the original evaluation numbers, which gives confidence that our product delivers what we claim it will.' A trend starting to gain traction is the sale of male sexed semen. 'It's getting only limited use so far, but I think it's something that will grow significantly in the future as producers get to appreciate the differences in growth rate of male calves,' comments Brad. 'It adds one more tool to what we are working to achieve, to maximize performance and economic return at every step along the supply chain.' ●