



Foundation COMMENTARY

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Times have never been better for Limousin. As I write this article, fed cattle are nearing \$1/cwt., and Limousin-influenced feeder cattle have been selling like hotcakes at video auctions across the country all summer. We experienced one of the strongest junior shows we have had in years with entries up over 100 head from the previous year.

It all started with a terrific bull-selling season in the spring with virtually every sale reporting a higher average than the prior year. We had a report from a producer who sells bulls private treaty saying they did so well they accidentally sold more bulls than they had. Leaving them scrambling to find bulls of similar quality and breeding as theirs' from other breeders to fill orders.

All year, you could hardly open a magazine without there being an article on the merits of crossbreeding, which should be music to the ears of any Limousin breeder. Yes, it's a great time to be in the Limousin business!

Some other terrific things have happened this year. The Board, with input by the membership, put together an aggressive strategic plan to move the breed forward. Among the many actions in the plan was a balanced budget, which was passed with unanimous consent at the August board meeting. It has been many years since the budget has been balanced, and we as a staff will do everything possible to come in on budget. The budget has been allocated towards high priority items in the strategic plan. I believe it was one of the best thought-through budget processes I have been involved in.

At NALF, we have added some hard-charging young staff members to compliment our veterans with Jonathan Beitia, communications director, being our newest addition. By membership request, we have hired someone to answer the phone. We have unveiled an exciting new website and developed a targeted marketing and advertising campaign with the hopes of strengthening the Limousin bull market. Make sure you get your bulls transferred to your commercial customers, because we plan to send volume buyers updated EPDs and a small gift of appreciation (with a Limousin logo of course) after the first of the year. Moral is high in the office, and we are all committed to building this great breed!

One of the things that has helped us is Mike Horvath, commercial marketing director, has been sending notes out to feedyards about the benefits of Limousin-influenced calves. An emphasis was on the positive genetic trend for docility.

I know I may sound redundant, but my goal is to assist you in making our breed better and the first step is reporting your chute scores. Your commitment has paid off so let's take a second and celebrate how far we have come. In 1995, the average Docility EPD was 5.0, it has risen to 18.2 following

the 2009 calf crop, and that is something to be proud of! Still, we must not become complacent. Docility and grade are still our two major barriers to entering into new herds, so let's keep working on docility until we have weeded-out all of our problem animals, and we have one of the most docile breeds in the industry.

I think some exciting news for Limousin was recently released on cow size. The average Angus and Hereford cow is now over 1,400 pounds, while Limousin has maintained a moderate cow size. Besides all the normal complimentary things we can do in a crossbreeding program with British-based cows like, improve Yield Grade, cow longevity, feed efficiency, etc., we can now add moderate cow size. That is a important element in a lot of environments, and I think it, along with our moderate milk, make us a fit for a whole host of management regimes. We may be the one Continental you can still background without worrying about overweight carcasses. A major plus.

Probably one of the most exciting things going on right now in the world of Limousin is the Lim-Flex® program. Lim-Flex is a Limousin, Angus or Red Angus hybrid. While the hybrids caught on quickly in Gelbvieh and Simmental, it has taken a little longer to catch-on with Limousin. The Lim-Flex hybrid is growing rapidly and Lim-Flex bulls are available in quantity from various breeders. That is because Angus and Limousin are the perfect complementary breeds; heterosis is becoming such an all-important factor in today's beef industry. It is estimated that herds gaining maximum heterosis will return 25 to 30 percent more per cow. Understand that two-thirds of the nation's cowherd being high percentage Angus; it leaves a lot of money on the table.

Lim-Flex can be used one of two ways. The first way is to breed Lim-Flex on Angus-based cows and produce quarter-bloods. This leaves a lot of heterosis on the table, but the quarter-bloods sold extremely well at video auctions this year. The second option, and what I suggest, is to have your customers put purebred or fullblood bulls on their Angus-based cows, and then go into a straight breeding program with the offspring using Lim-Flex bulls. This way your customers can maintain a 50 percent Limousin, 50 percent Angus herd with a high amount of heterosis and an extremely easy breeding system. With this second system, we have over 20 million Angus-based cows to convert, so we shouldn't run low on the need for good purebred and fullblood bulls.

The time is now for Limousin. Crossbreeding is back, Limousin bulls are selling well, an exciting junior program, clear direction in a strategic plan and Limousin-influenced feeder cattle in strong demand. Together, this is a winning formula for Limousin.