

Benefits of Highland Genetics

Crossbreeding



Purebred Highland Bull

There are two principle procedures for genetic improvement in commercial beef production. One is selection and the other crossbreeding. Selection is the process of collecting the best group of genes related to production of beef. Crossbreeding is the process of mixing superior genes from different breeds to make animals that produce better, are hardier and live longer. Heterosis (hybrid vigor) is observed when the measured production exceeds the average of the two or more breeds used in a crossbreeding program. Thus the progeny of a cross where one breed averages 2 lbs per day gain and the other averages 3 lbs per day could be expected to grow at a rate of 2.5 lbs per day. Often the progeny will average more, perhaps 2.8 lbs per day. The increase over the average of the two breeds is called heterosis effect.



Highland x Gelbvieh Steer



Purebred Highland Cow with Simmental Cross Calf

There is another potential advantage from crossbreeding. Two breeds can be combined which have quite different positive traits. One such situation is mating Highland bulls on another breed with particular interest in calving ease. An expected outcome would be enhanced rate of gain as indicated in the previous example, combined with the calving ease of the Highland breed. This procedure would be particularly useful in breeding first calf heifers, reducing the incidence of calving difficulties.

The Highland cow is well known for important traits like longevity and hardiness, often producing into her teens. She has superior maternal instincts and milking ability to raise a healthy calf ready to go after weaning. Highlands are good convertors of poor quality roughages and excellent foragers to take advantage of the grazing/feed resources available in your program.

Due to their outstanding characteristics including the hair coat, Highlands are becoming popular in the club calf world. Several top sires have Highland blood.

If you want to discuss using these fine genetics in your program, give us a call!

American Highland Cattle Association

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