

Prime Cuts

Considerations for Beef on Dairy II: Crossbreeds & Marketing

Famo Flier

With more dairies choosing to breed only their genetically superior animals for heifers, the remaining cows are increasingly being bred to beef sires. This has opened another opportunity to increase the value of these crossbred steers. It also provides a chance to increase the value of dairy bulls calves that have traditionally very little value when marketed, as with Jersey calves.

While dairy beef continues to be a valuable and profitable market, there are opportunities to cash in on more lucrative programs like Certified Angus Beef. When it comes to the CAB program, it is not enough that the animal be primarily black. It must also have the carcass quality to match. Producers can make wise decisions when it comes to utilizing beef sires. Important traits to breed for include marbling, muscling (muscle to bone ratio), respiratory health, and hybrid vigor. Because of the increase in popularity of crossbred dairy steers, the Simmental and Angus associations have developed indexes to help ease the selection process. The Simmental Association created the Hol-Sim index, and the Angus Association created the Angus-on-Holstein (\$H) and Angus-on-Jersey (\$J) indexes. By breeding to beef sires, these crosses have superior average daily gain and feed efficiency over their full-blood dairy counterparts. These improvements help to decrease the number of days to finish for crossbred steers.

Beef sire criteria for Holstein matings:

- ✓ Black hair coat (homozygous)
- ✓ Polled (homozygous)
- ✓ Frame size 5 – 5.5
- ✓ Muscling – ribeye area in top 20% of breed
- ✓ Marbling – top 20% of breed
- ✓ Calving ease direct – top 50% of breed

When marketing finished dairy on beef steers, make sure to note the packer's pricing structure. Are you getting paid a premium for CAB or not? Not all packers offer CAB programs. With the Holstein steer market being mature, there are many benefits to breaking into the growing dairy cross steer market and the potential premiums associated with it. As this new market matures, packers may become more discriminating against what they accept. Make sure your finishing program meets the nutritional needs of your dairy crossbred steers.

Feeding high energy finishing rations are crucial in getting that marbling necessary to qualify these steers for the CAB program. Holsteins and Holstein crosses are slower growing (compared to native beef cattle) so getting them ramped up on feeding earlier will help maximize their growth efficiency. When seeking out a finishing program make sure to identify one that is specifically designed for steers with dairy genetics such as Famo Feed's Dairy Beef Program. Select Choice Developer and Finisher are pelleted concentrates designed to be mixed with whole corn to provide a high energy ration to maximize growth and carcass quality. For more information on specific program details contact your Famo Feeds dealer or representative.

Qualifying as Certified Angus Beef:

- ✓ Predominately black hair coat (>51%)
- ✓ Modest to high marbling
- ✓ Superior muscling

Beef sire criteria for Jersey matings:

- ✓ Black hair coat (homozygous)
- ✓ Polled (homozygous)
- ✓ Frame size 6 – 6.5
- ✓ Muscling – ribeye area in top 20% of breed
- ✓ Marbling – top 20% of breed
- ✓ Calving ease direct – top 50% of breed