

Using Sim-Genetics to Boost Herd Productivity

Reported by Claire Allen, Farm Weekly, WA.



Peter Speers

CEO Simmental Australia

at the Bonnydale Black Bonanza Field Day
Bridgetown, WA in October
discussed increasing beef productivity with
Simmental and Sim-Genetics.

THE strength of the Simmental breed is invaluable when it comes to crossbreeding in commercial cattle enterprises, providing many added benefits to boost herd profits.

Simmental Australia CEO Peter Speers provided attendees to the Bonnydale Black Bonanza field day in Bridgetown last week with an insight into this, when he discussed the Simmental breed and its various genetic strains.

“Crossbreeding allows producers to capitalise on both hybrid vigour and the ability to blend the best traits of two or more breeds,” he said.

“Hybrid vigour is the free lunch in cattle breeding, delivering 10pc to 25pc production advantages, especially for traits of low heritability such as fertility. Equally as important is to blend traits to deliver progeny that better meet production, environment and market requirements.

“Since its introduction to Australia 35 years ago, Simmentals have been widely used in crossbreeding programs, producing high quality weaners and vealers with greater weight for age, more carcass yield and resulting higher profits.

Simmental delivers rapid weight for age, excellent muscling, high fertility, docility and the bonus of strong maternal traits of milk and mothering ability”, Mr Speers said.

“An often overlooked bonus in using Simmentals is the higher value of the cull cows.

Most herds sell 10pc to 15pc of their cow herd as cast for age cows every year. Simmental infused cull cows, being heavier and better muscled, fetch an extra \$50 to \$100 each, substantially adding to the bottom line of the enterprise,” Mr Speers said.

“Additional strains of the breed have also been developed, such as the solid Black and Red Simmentals which deliver the Simmental trait advantages as well as the convenience traits of solid coat colour, polledness, easier calving and often higher marbling levels.

This breed has become enormously successful providing the crossbreeder with extra flexibility when using Simmental genetics,” Mr Speers said.



On display at the Bonnydale Black Bonanza field day there were some of the solid Black Simmentals imported from the USA.



Growthy, well muscled SimAngus calves on Angus females purchased by Bonnydale and AI mated as heifers to purebred Black Simmentals.

Also on show at the field day were some Angus females purchased by Bonnydale and AI mated as heifers to purebred Black Simmentals.

Significantly, the calf birthweights were light, 24 to 40 kg, and calving difficulty was no greater than experienced with pure Angus with three pulled out of 40 heifers,” Mr Speers said.

“The Simmental-Angus calves have shown excellent weight gains due to hybrid vigour utilising the Simmental growth trait.

Credit must also be given to the Angus heifers for responding to the extra demands of these calves by producing more milk than they would have with slower growing Angus calves,” he added.

Mr Speers outlined the main designs of cross breeding programs.

“First there is the common terminal crossbreeding design, where Simmental sires are mated to cows of another breed (or cross) with all crossbred progeny sold,” he said.

“This program requires replacement females to either be purchased or bred in a separate program.

The second design is rotational crossbreeding, using two or more breeds in rotation between different herds. Eventually a two breed rotation will be producing half the progeny as 2/3 of breed A: 1/3 breed B and half the progeny as 1/3 breed A: 2/3 breed B.

This design replaces its own females and retains about 67pc of potential hybrid vigour,.” He explained.

Mr Speers said the third design uses composite bulls over crossbred cows, with female replacements selected from within the herd.

“These programs can be very effective and simple to operate, provided the bulls used possess the blend of traits desired for the breeding program. “ he outlined.

“The Simmental Association has introduced the SimAngus register, enabling designed breeding of composites containing Simmental and Angus or Red Angus content,” Mr Speers said.

“SimAngus cattle can be Breedplan recorded with the Simmental Association so breeders can evaluate their estimated breeding merit.

The main role of the SimAngus is to operate crossbreeding programs, which is especially important in smaller herds,” he advised.

“For example, SimAngus bulls can be mated to halfbred Simmental-Angus females to produce progeny maintaining half of each breed.

These female progeny are then also mated to SimAngus bulls to again produce progeny with a similar 50:50 content.

“This process is repeated with new SimAngus bulls purchased as required,” Mr Speers outlined.

“I believe the popularity of SimAngus will grow enormously,” he said.

“They enable simple to operate, profitable breeding programs that deliver good hybrid vigour plus an excellent balance of traits – more weight, carcass yield, milk, fertility, docility and marbling – all wrapped in a solid coloured, polled, easy calving package,” he concluded.