

## Line Breed to Quality

Worldly influences have dictated how we breed and manage our flocks and herds for the past 75 years. I am referring to university trained extension agents, commodity grain affiliates and their associates in the feedlot industry, and the EPD and DHIA promoters who effectively showcase the must-have genetics to even our children looking for that blue-ribbon 4-H project. Yes, there are good-hearted individuals among these groups who feel they are providing a valuable service, but even good intentions can become misguided. Unfortunately the majority are working for their profit, not yours.

All these influences have slowly changed our herds and flocks from efficient converters of grass and forage to what Joel Salatin refers to as “ruminant hogs” that now, because of their body size and confirmation, require grain for normal function and reproduction. This has happened with a stealth-like effectiveness. And because of the price differential (more) for feedlot type animals, cattle breeders have come to believe that what is in fact bad, is good and good is bad – remind anyone of scripture? When was the last time you were paid for quality? The emphasis has been on pounds of gain. If the quality happened to be there, there was no additional incentive for it.

Knowledge and selection criteria for the grass type animal have not only been lost, but the moneychangers despise the true grass type animal and the genetics to support that animal. To put it in biblical terms, we have lost our way (disobeying the Law) and are afraid of change because we may not be able to pay the king his usury and taxes and he will come and take our land, family and livestock (goods). We are allowing ourselves to be ruled by an Ishmael; under the Esau law. Under God’s law there is no going broke or paying taxes. The Jewish people under God’s covenant were never meant to pay taxes.

I truly believe that the Bible gives specific guidelines (laws) on how we are to live (including breeding animals). Let us look at what wisdom the creator of the universe gives us as law (God’s law) abiding believers. All who believe and live by faith in Jesus Christ will one day gain access to God’s kingdom.

When Joshua led the sons of Jacob across the Jordan River and conquered the land, it was divided among the 12 tribes and was given to them as everlasting gift (the land shall not be sold forever: for the land is Mine: Leviticus 25:13-28). Never to be sold and never to be bought or transferred to another tribe, (land was to be handed down from generation to generation in perpetuity Leviticus 25:13-28). Laws were in place for marriage, inheritance, borrowing, and repaying. In the year of the Jubilee, which came, every 50 years, slaves were set free; land and property were returned to the original owners. If hard times had come upon the people possessing and working the land it was returned to them free of debt or tax at Jubilee. There is no usury (interest or tax) in God’s laws. Usury is against Gods law.

God’s law says that a man is king over his property: the head of his household and a priest under Him (Jesus Christ hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: Revelation 1:5-6). Man was and should still be a free thinker with God’s law in his heart. God’s law is pure and undefiled and will guide our decisions in breeding and managing livestock and raising food if we

would only but follow that heart law. The question is will we continue to produce food as merely a way to make money, or will we change and work within the truth and reality of God's Word? If obedient we can be blessed, and through us be a blessing to others – our customers/families.

Where is your heart, in obedience or money? What will you do? Together we can take back our industry (from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent (fighting for salvation) take it (heaven) by force. Matthew 11:12). Are you willing to fight for His law and salvation? God gave the rich and fertile land across the Jordan to Israel in order that they would have proper nourishment, however they had to fight and take it by force. God gave America to our forefathers, however they had to fight to have it and fight to keep it. The laws have not changed from the days of Moses - we have changed and for the most part don't realize how we have deviated from His standards.

### **Breeding our Herds (Flocks)**

Let's assume we are working with commercial or non-registered animals. How does one manage this commercial herd into excellence?

My knowledge and experience have demonstrated to me that if I want to produce the finest of products (milk, meat, cheese, butter – even fibers) then there is one way to manage the breeding of my animals.

Step one is to keep records for every animal and each one should have some form of permanent identification. You will not be nearly as successful as you could be without a good record keeping system.

It is paramount to use the best sire available that possesses the desired quality traits, to begin a breeding program. Do not start with anything less whether it's a bull or semen for AI. Remember you are selecting for traits that will be in your future replacement females. Don't select a bull to use just as an experiment. We all like surprises but you can't afford them these days in the livestock breeding business. Write the standards that you are looking for down on paper. This can help you to truly grasp what you want and to not deviate from them.

You may need to start with artificial insemination to get the desired genetic traits started in your herd. Just keep in mind that you still want to use the best sire available. Having those traits (standards) written down will help you choose the right bull. Don't get EPD figures confused with meat quality and efficiency on grass if that is what you are looking for.

At some point (if not right away) in the not too distant future your most valuable sires will come from your own herd. Choose a bull calf that is out of your best cow (assuming she's been bred to your chosen sire). Don't get too concerned about what he looks like as a young animal. Although fine looking bull calves often turn into fine bulls, many times I've seen these great looking calves fall apart into or after puberty and the lesser looking ones turn into magnificent bulls. Any sire you choose must have the body shape and style that is conducive to staying in condition on a grass/forage diet, even through the breeding season. Of course, he must be reproductively sound (don't forget the importance of good legs and feet) and heavy on the masculine side.

Next it is vitally important that you know which of your females have the very best traits; the traits for quality food, in addition to reproductive and other performance indicators that you shall select for now and in the future. Think of your top cow as your Eve.

Take the sire that you have selected; he is your Adam. Breed him to all the females or a selected group. That same sire breeds the same females year after year until a son, that exhibits the concentrated desirable traits of his father in addition to the attributes from his mother, is a worthy replacement.

When that first generation of females from that mating of the selected females and your "Adam" reach breeding age (2 years old), breed them back to their father. Those resulting calves will be 75% of their father's genetic influence. You are beginning to do two things that will put consistency in your herd. You are starting to eliminate heterosis type breeding (Ishmael type or half blood which went against Esau's law) and you are beginning to build a paternal gene pool (God's law focuses on paternal lineages, not maternal).

Having a paternal gene pool is the only way to successfully and consistently pass quality traits onto future generations. You may find a new sire out of the calves that are at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  paternal blood level, but only if he came from a top female. This female is to have the physical signs for quality that indicate she would have fine textured meat and high butterfat. These physical signs include a soft hide, no hair on her udder, small cannon bones, a pointed cone shaped pole, and a good escutcheon. And of course she would have the body type that is compatible for growth and finishing on grass. "She would be good eating if she wasn't making babies".

You must remember that all high quality traits (fine textured and tender meat, milk rich in butterfat) are maternal and the way you incorporate those desired traits into the rest of your herd is through her son. Thank about that.

Also remember that even though every female in your herd is bred to the same sire, each of those females represent a different gene pool and this is why you have every animal identified and individual records on each one. Say you have names for the females you currently have. I would then recommend that all the calves male or female be given a name or ID that starts with the first letter of the mother's name. That is the system I use. It works very well and makes it easy to identify the female lines when I'm out in the pastures.

Let's assume you now have a chosen herd sire that was the result of a father/daughter mating. Select a few of the very best females, these would be his half-sisters, and breed him to them. You will be pleasantly surprised at the results.

Mating full siblings (from the same cow and sire) will produce the finest quality and if the desired traits, confirmation (phenotype) and masculinity are present in a bull calf from this breeding, he will be a true herd sire that rubberstamps his qualities in his calves. A herd sire like this can automatically put you in the bull business.

When you mate two animals that have all the production and quality traits that you are looking for and these two animals are full siblings, not only will you get potential herd sires but you will also get females that are better than their

mothers. And because of how the phenomena of mitochondrial DNA work, these females will produce good daughters even when paired with a not so impressive bull. Imagine what kind of reputation a seed stock breeder would get by putting these kinds of females on the market.

Line breeding is not the doom and gloom that most have been let to believe it is. It is actually quite simple, but one cannot throw caution to the wind. This method of breeding will in 3-4 generations create the kind and type herd you are striving for, but you can never cease from applying selection pressure. You should be slowly changing the undesirable characteristics to desirable and when, at any time, undesirable traits appear or reappear, those animals must be removed from the program.

Never use an inferior animal in this type of breeding program. There is more wisdom required to use this type of breeding than with out crossing and crossbreeding if one is to be successful and limit setbacks. Achievements can be made with line breeding that aren't possible with other methods.

If you feel you need to change the herd sire line then look to one of your other female lines and create a bull from that genetic pool. Remember you have created a paternal polygamy-breeding program. To loose sight of that and use an outside sire would be destructive to any progress made. **Don't ever bring in an outside sire.** If you don't have a cow family that represents the change you want or need then go and find an outside female from a friend or neighbor and put her under your paternal herd sire. The first generation will be a very growthy, heterosis calf, but when that heifer is bred back to her father the heterosis settles down.

You must remember that your knowledge of cattle conformation (bone, muscle, balance) and the ability to select are your weapons for success in a close breeding program. Study the genealogies in the bible for guidance. If you don't trust yourself completely call me, or someone you do trust, to observe your animals and the two of you (us) identify the top animals to be used for your breeding program.

If you are already a registered breeder and want to line breed, you go through the same process. Select the very best cows you have and breed them to the chosen bull. The only difference from the registered breeder and the commercial one is that it may be possible for the registered breeder to produce a herd bull in the first generation. It all depends on the level of quality in the chosen herd sire and how good the cows are that you put under him.

To create a true paternal herd sire, daughters get bred back to their fathers and even grandfathers. A second choice early in the building phase is using a half-brother to half-sister mating for a herd sire. Nothing creates good herd bulls faster or better than full sibs matings -this can happen after a couple generations into the breeding program. Another choice would be half sibling matings. Think about how and what you are creating; will the end results give you what you need?

After a few generations of building your gene pool(s) you may want to look at breeding to half brothers, uncles, and cousins from other notable female lines.

Remember that progress is only made through concentrating the genetic profiles in your herd sires. That won't happen with cross breeding or out crossing. Just like the misconception that is presented about line breeding; so is the deception about the benefits of heterosis and breeding for hybrid vigor.

The following are the keys to successful, sustainable food production.

- ✓ Intelligent line-breeding
- ✓ Knowing your females and which ones have the genetic ability to produce herd sires.
- ✓ Knowing what your customers want.
- ✓ Producing a quality product that is nutritious and tastes good.
- ✓ Seek and respond to feedback from your customers.
- ✓ Find and use heritage or heirloom genetics and be responsible managers to insure the integrity of those original creations provided to us for our well-being.
- ✓ Pay attention to the fertility of your soils and understand how it effects genetic expression and quality in both plants and animals.

Biblical perspective:

I am a king, a priest over the land and cattle I own.

I am a creator, a free thinker; I rein and rule for the good of my family, community and nation.

I must have regard for family and myself. If I do what is good for myself and family it will also be good for my community and nation.

I am a man just as Adam was the first man. The word Adam means man-masculine-warrior.

Parting thoughts

We as men must think ahead of the curve. We set the curve and must not be so easily influenced to fallow the curve set by another's agenda. We have been trained by a system that is not for us; but for the worldly king.