

from the office

LEAD IN

By Richard Spader
Executive Vice President
American Angus Association



We talk so much about efficiency in beef production these days that the word has almost lost its meaning. And certainly many cattle producers must be confused by the fact that nearly every breed association in the United States is using figures gleaned from U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) reports to show that theirs is the most efficient breed of beef cattle.

This trend was started by the American Angus Assn. The very first progress report issued by MARC showed tremendous advantages for Angus cattle in ease of calving and percent of live calves weaned and we have used it extensively. As the tests progressed, however, it was possible for other breeds to pull out individual bits of information, ignoring the vast majority of facts, and "show" that their breed does indeed possess some advantages. These "advantages," however, are

related mostly to growth rate and mature size.

But the overall facts have not changed. We still have the most efficient breed of beef cattle and we must keep the MARC information straight in our mind and use it effectively when we sell cattle, nationally, and in our individual herds.

The most recent research findings to come out of MARC lead to the inevitable conclusion that the British breeds, and Angus in particular, are far more efficient than the continental breeds. For many years some researchers have claimed there is really no difference between beef breeds, that continental or British breeds, if the calves are finished to the same end point, are equally efficient. The work done by Dr. Cal Ferrell and Dr. T.G. Jenkins and printed in MARC Progress Report No. 10 shows this is not the case. The British breeds, bred for more than two centuries for beef production, have a different metabolism that makes them much more economical. It is as simple as that.

The research took a look at total efficiency of British breed crosses (the Black Baldy cow) in comparison to other cross-bred females produced by breeding Angus and Hereford cows to Simmental, Charolais and Jersey bulls. The work evaluated energy requirements for maintenance, gestation and lactation.

Findings from the research basically show that Black Baldy cows and Jersey cross cows have similar maintenance requirements, the Charolais cross are intermediate in feed use and Simmental cross cows have high maintenance requirements.

The total annual energy used is as much as 30 percent higher for Simmental cross cows; 11 percent higher for Charolais cross cows, and 4 percent higher for Jersey cross cows in comparison to the Black Baldy. And maintenance accounted for 70 percent to 75 percent of the total annual energy require-

ments of each cow type. Differences in feed requirements for gestation and lactation were evident but requirements for these functions represented a relatively small proportion of the total.

Next the study looked at calf weight weaned per cow exposed. Again differences favored the Black Baldy. When cow energy requirements, weaning percentages and calf weaning weight were considered, the Black Baldy cows were most efficient with the Jersey cross second, the Charolais cross third and the Simmental cross cow last.

In the feedlot, on a 217-day post weaning feeding period, the progeny of the Charolais and Simmental cross cows were the least efficient converters of feed to beef and the Black Baldies were the best.

This is important information because it demonstrates actual breed differences in feed efficiency. To promote these findings the American Angus Assn. has entered into a joint advertising program with the American Hereford Assn. By now you no doubt have seen these ads in the *Drovers Journal*, *Western Livestock Journal*, *Beef Business Bulletin*, *Western Livestock Reporter*, etc. The figures used in the ad are based upon MARC results. They show that the feed needed to maintain 100 Angus-Hereford cows for a year will maintain only 90 Charolais cross cows and 77 Simmental cross cows.

This kind of information is important as you start into the bull selling season this spring. The truth about cow costs and efficiency has never been documented better for producers of the British breeds. You can offer tremendous feed efficiency to commercial cowmen that no producer of continental breeds can match. In addition, you also have the traditional Angus advantages that relate so much to overall efficiency too. It provides you with a powerful selling tool.

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