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Beef Semen Sales Set Record in '92

by Jerilyn Johnson

The beef industry has yet to match the dairy industry's adoption of artificial insemination. More than 70 percent of U.S. dairy producers have an AI breeding program. For the beef industry, that figure is approximately 10 to 15 percent, with purebred breeders making up a majority of that number.

The beef industry is gaining ground in the 1990s, however, for a variety of reasons. Many say we are *entering* a quality era with more and more producers readily accepting new management ideas and technology.

"For awhile, everyone was enthusiastic about AI," says Larry Dorsey, director of cattle production programs for Certified Angus Beef Program. "A lot of breeders tried it, but after awhile many found it was too time-consuming or labor intensive for their farming or ranching operation."

Dorsey believes the industry is now seeing a comeback. In his work with the CAB Cooperative Herd Program, Dorsey has signed up many producers who AI a group of heifers or cows to an Angus reference sire. These producers are working to improve the quality and consistency of their beef product and are willing to pay for AI semen from proven sires.

Fifty Angus bulls with favorable carcass EPDs are currently being tested in 40 herds enrolled in the CAB Cooperative Herd Program. Their first calf crop will be on the ground this spring and progeny data will be collected through the steer calves' development, marketing and processing.

Beef producers say they have also gone back to AI breeding to ensure their heifers are bred to a calving ease bull and are started on an early breeding and calving schedule.

Keith Vander Velde of ABS, DeForest, Wis., attributes his company's increased beef semen sales to higher heifer retention in the industry. "Producers are keeping more replacement heifers and AI breeding them to calving-ease bulls," he says. "They have the desire to maximize their calf

1992 ANGUS SEMEN SALES (Units of Semen)

Domestic	556,884
International	105,132
Custom*	243,383
Total	905,399

*Semen marketed from bulls owned by breeding farms or individuals.

SOURCE: National Association of Animal Breeders

crop but can't afford an extra bull just to breed to their replacement heifers."

Another reason could be the steady if not improved market prices of the '90s. An improved economy has made genetic improvement more attainable by producers—both commercial and purebred.

"Last year (1992) was a record year for beef semen sales," says Chuck Sattler, genetic programs administrator at the National Association of Animal Breeders (NAAB), Columbia, Mo. "Higher beef prices have influenced more producers to buy semen and use AI again. We are hoping it's a permanent attitude change, and producers are accepting this technology and finding it a useful management tool."

DOMESTIC BEEF SEMEN SALES (Units of Semen)

Top 10 Breed	1992	1991	1990
Angus	556,884	501,025	410,026
Simmental	138,036	144,550	127,510
Polled Hereford	110,345	108,518	98,656
Brahman	56,646	56,716	47,083
Red Angus	40,516	33,185	26,580
Charolais	31,007	25,567	25,607
Gelbvieh	29,159	23,637	27,606
Limousin	28,232	30,909	28,430
Horned Hereford	11,735	16,850	14,580
Chianina	10,279	15,377	10,445
Total Beef	1,074,645	1,017,026	880,935

SOURCE: National Association of Animal Breeders

BEEF SEMEN EXPORT SALES

(Units of Semen)

Top 10 Breed	1992	1991	1990
Angus	105,132	49,480	66,601
Simmental	95,711	67,772	52,690
Polled Hereford	56,130	26,758	36,692
Red Angus	45,604	30,686	22,343
Brahman	44,754	74,028	37,707
Limousin	36,771	17,414	11,334
Charolais	14,025	12,331	9,875
Gelbvieh	10,593	2,474	3,678
Piedmont	6,904	5,539	4,198
Braunvieh	6,520	8,427	10,944
Total Beef	451,158	304,695	268,471

SOURCE: National Association of Animal Breeders

Beef domestic semen sales have shown strong growth, too, increasing 15.5 percent in 1991, and another 5.67 percent in 1992. Angus was the top AI breed, with 556,864 units sold in 1992, an increase of 11 percent over 1991.

Beef semen export sales experienced the most growth last year. A total of 451,153 units were sold by U.S. AI businesses to other countries around the world. This was a 48 percent increase over 1991 sales. The Angus breed led sales, with 105,132 units sold. That figure was up a remarkable 112 percent over 1991.

"International semen sale figures tend to jump up and down year to year," says Roy Wallace of Select Sires, Plain City, Ohio. "The value of the U.S. dollar has the most influence. The positive figures of 1992 do show that other countries are looking to the United States because of the American Angus Association's and other breed associations' sire summaries and quality of genetics."

Custom frozen semen, semen marketed from bulls owned by breeding farms or individuals not AI companies, have also shown increases over the past two years. In 1992, 243,363 units were marketed in the United States.

"We are continuing to gain in the beef market and indications are this will continue, both domestically and internationally," says Cordon Doak, NAAB president.

Collecting and publishing sales figures is only one of NAAB's activities. This trade association, representing AI organizations, communicates industry viewpoints to government agencies and other industry related businesses

Each member organization donates a percentage of its semen sales to help fund NAAB.

NAAB has administered a dystocia summary for many years and currently summarizes and releases data two times per year. In 1991 a framework was developed so non-NAAB members could include their sires in the calving ease report.

International activities are funded through two programs of USDA/Foreign Agriculture Service. The first is the Foreign Market Development or Cooperator Program. Educational seminars are one of the major activities carried out under this program. The second is the Market Promotion Program (MPP), which includes both generic and branded product promotion. While funding for each program is separate, they are managed to complement each other.

"When we look at the international market we consider both the units and the dollar value," Doak says. "For example, there was an increase of 1.4 percent in total unit (beef and dairy) sales in 1991 over 1990. However, the dollar value of total dairy and beef semen exports declined with 1991 showing a 13 percent decrease. The dollar value decline could be expected because the current growth markets are those that buy less expensive semen. Considering the changes taking place in many markets, such as the European Community, and increased competition, it would not be totally unexpected to see the dollar value continue to erode."

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