

A New Brand Of Quality

Genetics Plus Inc. is a company dedicated to adding predictability and consistency to the cattle industry by offering genetically superior replacement heifers.



Blacks are popular for Genetics Plus customers. Heifers are developed before breeding at Larson Farms, Randolph, Kan.

What would you give for 100 bred packages of genetically known Angus females bred to the bull of your choice, due to calve within the period you set, and which come guaranteed bred with a complete set of records and an ultrasound picture of the calf?

Or are you the type of breeder who would enjoy knowing you can get a bonus for producing genetically known females? Both of these options are available with Genetics Plus Inc.

◆ Consistency Through Angus Genetics

Two progressive cattle producers generated the idea of Genetics Plus. Galen Fink, seedstock producer, and Gary Johnson, commercial cattleman, thought it was time to focus more on genetics — other than the bull side, explains Joe Rickabaugh, manager of Genetics Plus.

Developing the idea and starting the company were the three partners, Fink Beef Genetics Systems, Galen and Lori Fink, Manhattan, Kan.;

Mills Cattle Co., Randy Mills, Florence, Kan.; and Johnson Farms, Gary Johnson, Dwight, Kan. "The three of them got together and it was a natural fit," Rickabaugh says,

◆ Benefits for the Customer

"The customer is going to be the boss," Rickabaugh says. "We are going to supply the heifers he/she wants."

Purchasing bred replacement females allows the commercial cattle producer to eliminate low

birth weight expected progeny difference (EPD) bulls for heifers and produce a product the industry wants quicker. A producer can also utilize resources on a producing unit instead of a development unit and allows them to become a maternal producer. Through Genetics Plus you can change your herd rapidly.

The customer can select the breeding of the heifers, the sire they are bred to, the calving interval, size, breed and whatever else they want. Genetics Plus can even guarantee the sex of the calf.

A bonus for producers who purchase replacements compared to developing them is guaranteed pregnancy,

Genetics Plus is dedicated to developing high quality females. When selecting heifers for the program they cull bad eyes, short tails and any physical defects. They also take the loss if a heifer is open or late bred.

Producers who purchase Genetics Plus females can enjoy a shorter calving season synchronized to fit their schedule.

After the heifers are delivered Rickabaugh tries to remain in contact with the customer. After calving the customer has the opportunity to become a supplier by selling the heifer calves back to Genetics Plus.

"It is a bonus situation: Rickabaugh says, "The more I know about a group of heifers the more I pay."

His goal is to be able to supply a group of half, three-quarter sisters or even full-siblings to his customers. In turn, his company is promoting more consistency and uniformity in the cattle industry.

◆ Benefits for the Supplier

Galen Fink explains there are cattle producers who have the genetics in their herds but are not getting paid for it. "So we developed a company that would reward them for their genetics. It is something the hog industry did several years ago," he says.

Heifers selected by

Genetics Plus receive top market price. Suppliers receive a premium for their heifers based on their genetics and physical attributes. Of course, the more Rickabaugh knows about a set of heifers the more he will pay. Average premiums paid for heifers that are genetically proven ranges from \$25 to \$50. A bonus price is added for reproductive performance.

Suppliers can also promote this opportunity with their customers of breeding stock. A bull customer is likely to come back if he knows he can receive a premium for his heifers when he uses your bull.

◆ Finding Your Match

Customers set the criteria for the heifers they want and Rickabaugh goes and finds them. Criterion requested could be mature size, breed composition, pedigree or even a specific range of EPDs.

After receiving a request, Rickabaugh goes to his database of suppliers to see if there are any matches. If there are no matches he goes on a hunt to find what the customer wants.

After finding a supplier, Rickabaugh sorts the heifers, culling ones with physical defects. Due to the premium we pay, I ask for the right to do heavy culling, he explains.

The heifers are taken to be conditioned and developed at Larson Farms, near Randolph, Kan. Heifers are placed in the lot 90 to 100 days before synchronization. The heifers are put on a wet ration of wheat haylage, corn silage and protein, gaining about 2 pounds a day.

Before taking ownership of the heifers Rickabaugh requires they have received all of their calf shots. These include: pasteurella/hemophilus, 7-way blackleg, IBR, BRSV, F₁₀ and BVD. They want the heifers to be calthood vaccinated, dewormed and weaned for at least 30 to 45 days.

Once in the lot they receive vaccinations for leptovibrio and are poured as the need



There is going to be more focus on predictability in the future, said Joe Rickabaugh, manager of Genetics Plus. Rickabaugh discussed his goals with Kansas State University students on a field trip.

warrants. They will also start a scour guard vaccination program if the customer desires.

Genetics Plus heifers must meet strict selection criteria to continue through synchronization and breeding. All heifers are given a breeding soundness exam 45 to 50 days prior to breeding. Pelvic measurements and reproductive tract scores will be collected on individual heifers. They will be freeze branded with G+ and the year, double ear tagged, and tattooed in both ears prior to delivery for permanent identification purposes. Heifers that don't meet the requirements will be culled at this time.

They are then synchronized with MGA and lutalyse and bred to sires of the customer's choice. Rickabaugh does suggest his customers use high accuracy EPD sires. Calving ease is an important trait to consider when selecting a sire. The customer also selects the calving dates and length of breeding season. Heifers can be developed to calve any time of the year.

Before delivery the heifers are guaranteed, by ultrasound, to be bred 45 to 90

days. The customer will receive a complete set of records about the individuals.

◆ What's in the Future?

In nine months Genetics Plus Inc. has placed more than 500 heifers. They are currently developing 550 that will be ready to artificial inseminate (AI) in late April.

At this time they are developing heifers at Larson Farms but hope to set up satellites around the country as the company grows.

A goal of Rickabaugh's is to gather as much carcass data possible for their customers. All culled heifers are slaughtered and data is collected on those individuals.

Another avenue Genetics Plus has discovered is producing heifers to serve as recipients for embryo transfer (ET) programs. When the producer is done using them as recipients they can make above average commercial females.

They will also develop and breed animals for producers who do not want to hassle with the heifers on their farm.

Rickabaugh says the down cattle market is giving him an opportunity to build a pool of suppliers. Since May more

than 50 people have contacted him about being a supplier.

"They are asking the right questions," Rickabaugh says. Many of the suppliers are asking what genetics they need to use.

Ninety to 95 percent of the requests are for blacks or black-baldies which creates a lot of opportunities for Angus breeders.

Genetics Plus creates opportunities for different facets of the cattle business:

1. Angus breeders can serve as a source of females;
2. AI companies benefit from the purchasing of semen;
3. Customers benefit by not having to condition and breed first-calf heifers;
4. The customer also has the opportunity to sell the heifer calves off the Genetics Plus heifers back to Rickabaugh;
5. Feedlot operators are excited about the opportunity of feeding out calves with known genetics.

For more information about Genetics Plus Inc. contact Joe Rickabaugh, 5500 SE Highland Ave., Topeka, KS 66609; (913) 862-2232.