

Two Different Ways To Profit With Continental or British Crosses

I have been analyzing pages and pages of recent kill data from Lake View Piedmontese of South Dakota this past week.

There were 740 head of Piedmontese-cross steers and heifers, with data from live weight to rib eye size and yield and quality grade. All were fed out at Lake View Piedmontese and slaughtered in the summer through fall of 2007.

420 head were Piedmontese X Continental-breeds, specifically fed for a "lean market" and 320 head were Piedmontese X British-breeds that were fed for a "choice market".

Both sets of data are simply amazing... including the fact that a total of 4.72% of 740 animals fell into the Yield Grade 3 category. That is 35 head out of 740. (29.28% better than the National average.) There was one Pied X British-breed animal ranked as YG 4.0 out of 740 head. (That's 0.135%)

According to the 2005-2006 National Beef Quality Audit, 34% of US carcasses fall into Yield Grade 3. This most recent Audit also confirms there are slightly more animals in the Yield Grade 4-5 as there are in Yield Grade 1 categories. (14.5% YG4-5 and 14.4% in YG1) In fact, Yield Grade 4-5 animals have increased by 6% from the 1995 Audit. The Audit strongly encourages the industry to work hard to reduce the number of Yield Grade 4-5 cattle. More YG4-5s indicate a problem in the beef industry, because the trend to a lack of muscle (meat) impacts processors bottom lines. Of course, we know if the processor doesn't have a decent profit margin, the producer's margin will be pinched as well. Other points of concern from the recent Audit are 1) cattle are still too fat; some 15% reach market with excess fat; and 2) carcass sizes are increasing; too large for food service – yet Yield Grade 4-5s are increasing. This is odd. Bigger carcasses, too fat, with not enough meat on their bones...

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CHART A		420 Piedmontese X Continental	320 Piedmontese X British-breed
TRAIT	2005-2006 Nat'l Beef Quality Audit (NBQA) Averages	Fed specifically for a "lean" market	Fed specifically for a "choice" market
Yield Grade 1 or less	14.4 %	82.14 %	47.81 %
Yield Grade 2	37.2 %	17.6 %	41.56 %
Yield Grade 3	34 %	0.23 %	10.62 %
Yield Grade 4-5	14.5 %	0 %	0.315 % of 320 head, or 0.135% out of 740 head
Marbling SL-SM	74.5 %	75 %	64.6 %
Marbling MD-MT	20 %	4.29 %	29.38 %
Marbling SLAB	2.6 %	0 %	2.5 %
Marbling MAB	0.4 %	0 %	0 %
Rib Eye 16 inches or more	8.8 %	35.47 %	25.94 %
Rib Eye 14 inches or more	35.15 %	82.14 %	74.38 %
Rib Eye 13 inches or less	65 %	6.19 %	10.31 %
Rib Eye less than 11 inches	7.6 %	0 %	0 %



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Two Different Ways to PROFIT (continued)

Cattlemen need to see these Piedmontese numbers, and re-think their terminal cross sire selections.

420 head of Piedmontese X Continental-breed (that is: half-blood Piedmontese, 1-copy for the unique myostatin gene) averaged:

- 82.14% Yield Grade 1 or less.

That is 345 head out of 420.

There were actually 79 head (18.8%) that were LOWER than Yield Grade 1.

- 17.6% Yield Grade 2. That is 74 head out of 420.

1 animal out of 420 was a Yield Grade 3. That equals 0.23% in the YG 3 category.

In this group, there were more cattle lower than YG 1 than there were cattle in the YG 2 category.

Based on the Texas A&M on-line estimates of percentages of meat in each Yield Grade category, there is a 4.6% spread between Yield Grade 3 and Yield Grade 1 for the amount of bone-less retail product.

The 2005-2006 Beef Quality Audit tells us that the industry averages for Yield Grade are: 14.5% YG4-5, 34% are YG3, 37.2% are YG2 and only 14.4% are YG1 or less.

So, applying those percentages to this group of 420 Piedmontese-Continental crosses, we would have only 60 head in the YG1 or less...instead of 345 head. There would be 156 head of YG2s instead of 74 head, and 142 head of YG3s instead of 1 animal. There would also have been 60 head of YG4-5 animals.

So, how many more pounds of retail product would there be in the Piedmontese-crosses than the industry average, given a spread of 4.6% between YG1 to YG3 ??

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YIELD GRADES EXPLAINED

In beef, yield grades estimate the amount of boneless, closely trimmed retail cuts from the high-value parts of the carcass—the round, loin, rib, and chuck. However, they also show differences in the total yield of retail cuts. We expect a YG 1 carcass to have the highest percentage of boneless, closely trimmed retail cuts, or higher cutability, while a YG 5 carcass would have the lowest percentage of boneless, closely trimmed retail cuts, or the lowest cutability. The USDA Yield Grades are rated numerically and are 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Yield Grade 1 denotes the highest yielding carcass and Yield Grade 5, the lowest.

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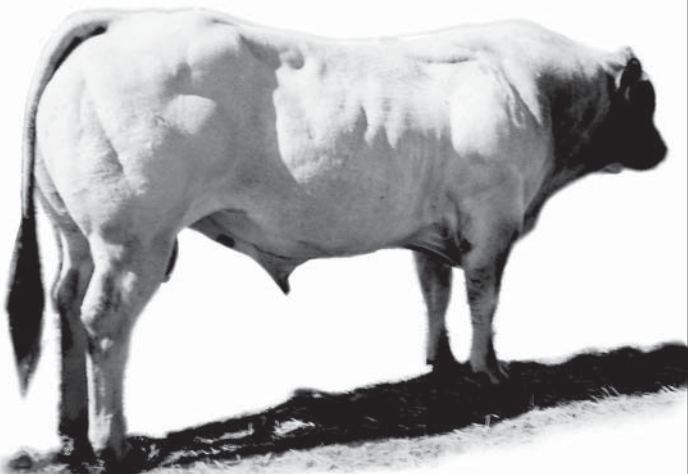
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Two Different Ways To Profit With Continental or British Crosses

Rib eye sizes were exceptional for the 740 Piedmontese crosses. In the PiedXContinental group, 345 head had rib eyes of 14 sq. inches or more. That is 82.14%. The Beef Quality Audit tells us that the industry average is 35.15% for 14 inch or more rib-eyes. The Audit also found that 65% of US beef cattle posted 13 inch or less for rib eye size. Our Pied group had only 6.19% in the 13 inch & under category. (With nothing under 11 sq. inches in either PiedXContinental or PiedXBritish, while the industry averages 7.6% under 11 sq.inches). Only 8.8% of industry carcasses post a 16 inch or more rib eye, according to the recent Audit – and these Piedmontese crosses had 35.47% (149 head) in that bracket !

Marbling is also targeted in the Beef Quality Audit as ‘needing to be improved’ while over-all fat levels need to be reduced. The industry is producing 74.5% of carcasses with Slight (SL) to Small (SM) levels of Marbling. 20% receive Moderate (MD) to Modest (MT) Marbling scores, 2.6% are Slightly Abundant (SLAB), and only 0.4% are Moderately Abundant (MAB). The Piedmontese X Continental cattle we are reviewing were finished specifically for a “lean market” and yet 315 head out of 420 (75%) were rated at Slight to Small Marbling scores, and 18 head were rated at Modest to Moderate Marbling !

However, in the Piedmontese X British-breed crosses, finished for a ‘choice market’, 29.38% were rated Modest to Moderate compared to 20% for the general industry; and 2.5% were rated Slightly Abundant, compared to 2.6% for the general industry. Slight to Small Marbling was seen in 64.6% of the Piedmontese-crosses compared to 74.5% as found in the Beef Quality Audit.

So, the Piedmontese crosses ability to marble is evident.

The 320 Piedmontese X British-breed cattle also averaged a 15.04 sq. inch rib eye size and a Yield Grade of 2.0014 while they also had better than average marbling ! There were no animals in the YG4-5 range and only 10.62% in the YG3 range compared to the 34% industry average.

Quality Grade categories, according to the Beef Quality Audit, show an industry average of 3% in Prime, 19% in Premium Choice, 35% in Choice, 37% in Select and 3.5% in Standard. The Piedmontese X Continentals, fed for a “lean market” came away with 88 head (20.95%) in the Choice Grade, 245 head (58.3%) in the Select and 81 head (19.2%) in the Standard Grade. But the Piedmontese X British-breeds posted 8 head (2.5%) in the Prime Grade, 236 head (73.75%) Choice, 72 head (22.5%) in Select, and only 4 head (1.25%) in Standard Grade.

The bottom line is very clear. If you want to produce cattle for a specialty “lean market” you should be crossing your Continental cows with a 2-copy Piedmontese bull. If you want to produce cattle for a “Choice market” you should be crossing your British-bred cows with a 2-copy Piedmontese bull.

Improve the Yield Grades and rib eye sizes dramatically no matter what cross you choose, and maintain decent levels of marbling even in “lean” production models. – as easily as choosing a Piedmontese bull. One cross breeding season can move you into the higher end of the pay bracket.

It is obvious why the NBQA strongly recommends that the industry try to move more cattle out of the Yield Grade 4-5 range and into more productive levels. Chart B shows that Marbling is only ‘somewhat improved’ in these over fat Yield 4-5 cattle, but the reduction in rib eye size is dramatic.

The Piedmontese X British-breeds shown in Chart A have achieved nearly the same level of marbling, but managed to average a Yield Grade of 2.0014 over 320 head, and average rib eye size of 15.04 sq. inches, with 76.25% grading Prime and Choice.

I will hazard a guess, and say that I bet most, if not all, of the Yield Grade 4-5 cattle from the NBQA were straight British-breed cattle.

Then, I suggest you read over the data on the Piedmontese X British-breed animals again, and consider just how easy it is to affect a positive change on your beef production, and your bottom line, if you have a British-based commercial cow herd. You just need a Piedmontese bull.

Chart B: from the 2005-2006 National Beef Quality Audit, the frequency of Marbling and Rib Eye sizes in Yield Grade 4-5 cattle were noted:

TRAIT	NBQA Yield Grade 4-5
Marbling SL-SM	60.8 %
Marbling MT-MD	34.4 %
Marbling SLAB	3.8 %
Marbling MAB	0.9 %
Rib Eye under 11 inches	17.6 %
Rib Eye 13 inches and under	93.8 %
Rib Eye 14 inches or more	6.3 %
Rib Eye 16 inches or more	0 %