

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE

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Simmental Cattle Breeders' Society of New Zealand

Dear Breeder,

Please find enclosed a summary of a survey conducted by AFFCO's Manawatu Beef Packers plant for prime steers/heifers killed during the 1994/95 season.

It is hoped that this survey along with the accompanying chart will dispel some of those myths circulating in the beef industry, that one breed is better than another, particularly in being able to meet the carcass quality characteristics for export.

We are all aware, that even in this beef downturn, Simmental and Simmental cross cattle are consistently topping weaner sales and achieving good carcass stats.

This survey has only focused on the beef quality aspects of the breeds and as you are aware there are many additional advantages of Simmental cattle and their respective crosses, namely superior 'grass-fed' growth rates, muscling ability and the fact that EBVs are now being generated for these carcass traits.

I trust that you will find this survey thought provoking and a confirmation of your already held beliefs concerning the Simmental breed.

I believe that this information should be used by yourselves as further ammunition when dealing with prospective bull buyers and others involved in the beef industry.

You as Simmental Society members need to help me dispel the myth, held by many cattlemen that the carcasses of European crosses are of inferior quality and not as suitable for export to our Asian markets. The attached review should help you put the record straight.

However, I firmly believe that now is the right time to reposition our breed, so as we are well placed to reap the rewards once the inevitable upturn occurs.

There is fast moving change occurring within the freezing industry, in respect to how farmer suppliers will be paid in the near future, namely on 'quality' and 'yield'. We need to be ready for it!!

So let us all use this information to our advantage. This represents the first stage of our exciting promotional campaign for 1997- Your Council has several other exciting promotional ideas, but for reasons of commercial sensitivity, I am unable to divulge them at this time. Rest assured that your Council and myself are working on a campaign that will help reposition the breed with the high profile it rightly deserves.

This exciting 1997 promotional campaign should go some way towards repositioning the Simmental as the breed that is the natural choice as the (maternal) terminal sire for the commercial beef farmer with the crossbred progeny capable of meeting all the prescribed carcass quality characteristics and generating a financial premium.

Already, I have visited several processors with the view of revamping our Certified Simmental eartag scheme. I am currently working on a recording system with several processors in order to facilitate the transfer of the carcass quality characteristics' feedback. To date several hundred commercial farmers have been written to, outlining the eartag scheme and highlighting the advantages of correct identification. The response has been encouraging.

Once again I urge you to read the attached review and support the fact that 'the Simmental and Simmental cross is capable of producing 'quality carcasses' that meet the export specifications and that there is more variation within a breed than between breeds.

Notes to accompany enclosed chart:

Below is a paraphrased account of a Review of 1994/95 Prime Steer /Heifer processing at AFFCO's Manawatu Beef Packers Plant' Please refer to the data in the attached tables.

N.B,

- (i) The average weight of all prime steers processed through Manawatu Beef Packers during the season ended 30/09/95 was 317.98kg.
- (ii) The statistics on breeds and cross-breeds have been based on more than 250 Simmental steers processed.
- (iii) The live weight of each animal is recorded immediately after it has been stunned and before any further processing takes place.
- (iv) Most prime steers are processed on the morning shift which commences at 6 am. Incoming prime steers typically arrive, during the previous evening.
- (v) Dressed weight to live weight ratios vary widely between individual animals of the same mob, depending a lot on the extent to which the animal has emptied out the contents of the digestive system since they were taken off pasture on the farm.

From the review it has been established that

(a) Dressed Weight to Live Weight.

From the attached schedules the leaders were Charolais (57.43% average), Limousin (57.20%), Limousin Cross (57.09%), **Simmentals (56,95%)**, Murray Greys (56.64%), and Simmental Cross (56.56%).

(b) Fat Depth:

(Average depth of subcutaneous fat as measured over the twelfth rib.)

As expected the European beef breeds and their respective crosses ranged in 'fat depth' from an average of 4,6mm (Charolais) to **5 6mm (Simmental)**. Other British beef breeds and their crosses ranged from 7 2mm to 8.4mm (average).

(c) Fat Scores:

The lower the score the whiter the fat colour. The scores were correlated for grassfed prime steers The export chiller trade prefers a score of less than 5.0.

Fat colour is very much dependent on type of feed and climate, ie. the following scores are a reflection of the relatively dry weather patterns experienced over the spring/summer months in much of the plants catchment

The Angus and Angus crosses, in absolute terms achieved lower scores, i.e. 4.88 and 4.93 respectively, whereas the **Simmental breed and Simmental crosses** scored 5.07 and 5.03

However, with reference to the colour chart you will note that there is very little difference in actual colour.

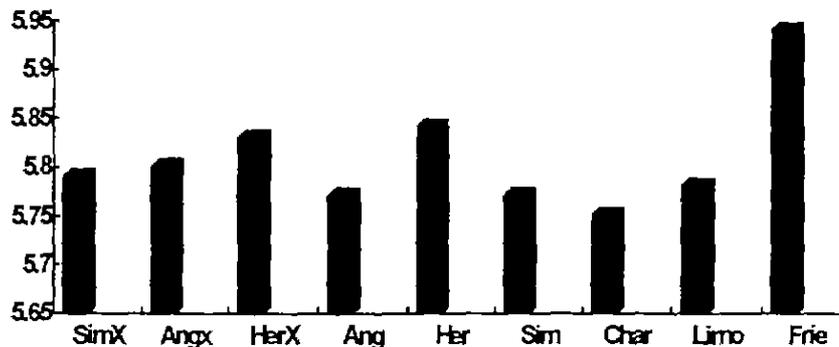
(d) Meat Colour:

Differences between the average meat colour of most of the higher volume prime steer breeds were minimal. **Simmental cross** scored 5.26 whereas the Angus scored 5.27. The lower the score the more acceptable the meat is to the Japanese market, In general, the level should not exceed 6.0 to meet recognised end consumer requirements.

(e) Average pH: (recorded the next day after slaughter)

pH is very much dependent on farm management practices, such as handling cattle quietly, not disturbing their social

groupings in the weeks leading up to processing, paying careful detail to their nutrition and watering and generally avoiding all potential sources of stress. The review established that there was wider variation in average pH for individual suppliers than there was for individual breed groups. Overall, in accordance for the export chiller trade the pH specification should be below 5.8.



pH versus Breed type and cross (as per 94/95 Review)

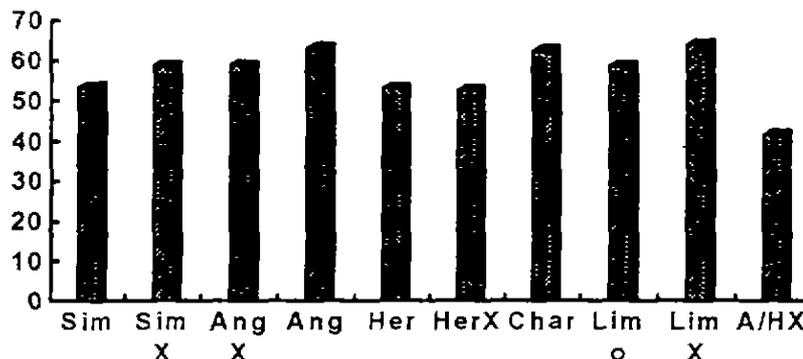
Seafreight Quality Strike rate:

The review established in terms of the overall strike rate for quality, a percentage of the kill for each breed class based on meat colour, fat colour and pH, that the **Simmental cross** achieved a standard similar to the Angus cross, that was only 4% less than the Angus.

The Limousin cross achieved a strike rate of

63.8% which was actually higher than the Angus, despite the Angus promotional claims.

Percentage of Breed type meeting the Seafreight Quality characteristics



Summary:

Interestingly, the survey established that on the 'meat quality' aspects that there was very little difference between the **Simmental cross**, the Angus and all the other beef breeds. Furthermore, according to this review, all

the beef breeds are capable of meeting the carcass quality characteristics.

Note that no indication was given as to the other breed involved in the Angus cross. Is this an identification problem? Here lies the advantage of the **Certified Simmental eartag** scheme which will help to correctly identify the major advantages of the **Simmental** in the cross breeding programme coupled with demonstrating the important influence of the **Simmental** in producing carcasses that achieve a significant 'seafreight quality strike rate', in order to meet the requirements of our premium export markets.

The obvious advantage according to the survey, is the additional saleable meat generated from the Simmental crosses in comparison to the British beef breeds, coupled with the faster on farm growth rates, the muscling ability and the fact that EBVs are now being generated for these carcass traits.

Furthermore, Doug Lincham, the Client Services Manager with AFFCO agreed that "there was more variation within a breed than between breeds" in respect of the carcass quality characteristics. In addition, the Plant Manager at Manawatu Beef Packers in Fielding commented at a recent meeting with some **Simmental Society** representatives that "the breed was unimportant. If the carcass fulfilled the carcass quality specifications as required by our Japanese export markets, it could be exported to Japan".