

## Capture the Extra Value of Limousin-Influenced Calves

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Are your commercial customers looking for buyers for their calves? Do you want them to earn a premium for using your genetics? The NALF staff can help.

Partnerships have been developed with companies such as Meyer's Natural, Laura's Lean and Strauss Veal, who are looking for Limousin-influenced feeder calves of all percentages. Relationships continue to expand with feeders, including Five Rivers Cattle Feeding, and a number of Limousin seedstock producers who realize the value of the Limousin-influence, particularly in natural and non-hormone treated (NHTC) programs.

Limousin-influenced cattle are increasingly desired for programs that do not allow the added chemistry of implants, beta-agonists and ionophores. These are programs that rely on enhanced genetic ability to gain and convert in order to maintain profitability. Once performance enhancers such as implants and beta-agonists are removed from the equation, Limousin-influenced cattle consistently hit the mark for quality grade with the added benefit of the feedlot and carcass performance the breed is known for. The added efficiency of feed conversion, cost of gain, and the combination of optimum quality and yield grades, has added value for the feeder and thus added value for the producer. This efficiency becomes even more evident when corn hovers between \$6 and \$7 per bushel.

For example, in 2010, a Limousin feeder in Nebraska purchased a group of 400 Limousin-influenced feeder steers from a producer in California. These cattle topped the Superior Livestock

Video Auction in Winnemucca, Nevada, and were fed for Tyson Foods' natural program. They graded 87% Choice or Prime with no Yield Grade 4s, over a 65% dress, and closed out \$147 per head profit for the feeder. This combination of performance and grade is outstanding and is the type of cattle feeders want, need and are willing to pay premiums for.

The ability of Limousin genetics has not been lost to the packing sector. Enhanced dressing percentage and added pounds of retail product continue to show the benefits of the Limousin-influence to the packer. Processors like Tyson Foods and Meyer's Natural see the value in Limousin-influenced cattle as they maintain high-dressing percentages and low yield grades while grading more than 80% Choice if kept natural. Word continues to circulate that Limousin-influenced cattle work well for all segments of the natural beef production chain.

At the retail level, natural products continue to move off the shelves at a rapid pace despite a poor economy and in spite of the added price, based mainly on consumer confidence in the product. An executive with a larger retail restaurant that uses natural meat exclusively stated that they plan to expand by 140 stores in the next year.

The growth of natural programs has presented the Limousin breed with an opportunity to display the added value of good genetics in the feedlot and on the rail. Now is the time to help your commercial customers capitalize and NALF can help make those connections.

It is fairly easy for a producer to make a product for the natural market. The

main requirement is that the cattle are not implanted, and the producer must not feed Bovatec or Rumensin in feed and/or mineral. Also, sick cattle that are treated must be identified. Normally this is done by notching either the ear or the tag, or can be accomplished by tagging treated cattle with a different tag.

Most packers except a signed affidavit that states the animals have received no implants or antibiotics. There are a number of companies that will certify a group of calves as natural or NHTC. Through partnerships with IMI Global and Tri-Merit, NALF can help your customers get into these programs and get the calves identified as Limousin-influenced with the new LimMark and LimChoice tags. Premiums for these cattle can range from \$5 per head for age and source verified, to as much as \$100 per head for natural/NHTC cattle.

The opportunity is here for the breed to be recognized for its performance and efficiency. By connecting your commercial customers with NALF and its commercial programs this fall, you can be sure they will get the most for their calf crop and have money to spend come bull sale season. **LW**