

Kansas Department Of Agriculture Joins With Costa Rican Cattlemen

Improving and expanding the Costa Rica beef industry while increasing the opportunity for the sales of U.S., and specifically Kansas beef genetics is the goal for the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) along with the American International Charolais Association, the Montana Department of Agriculture and the Costa Rica Institute of Innovation and Ag Technology Transfer who have partnered on a project to showcase U.S. beef cattle genetics. The joint project began three years ago with the focus on improving beef quality in Costa Rica while at the same time increasing market opportunities for U.S. ranchers to sell genetics in the Central American country.

This multi-year program has facilitated the use of U.S. Charolais and Red Angus semen for artificial insemination of Costa Rican Brahman and Nellore cows. The bulls chosen for the project are in the top or bottom ten percent of each respective breed for their marbling expected progeny difference (EPD). One of the sires utilized in the project was bred by Mushrush Red Angus Cattle of Strong City, Kansas.

In the spring of 2013, 600 units of Charolais and Red Angus semen were exported to Costa Rica from eight U.S. bulls. Twenty-five calves were born in early 2014 with an anticipated 150 more due in early 2015.

Performance data including birth weight, weaning weight and carcass weight will be collected on the calves from birth to slaughter in order to compare the U.S.-sired calves with the Costa Rican-sired calves. The anticipated outcome is that the U.S.-sired calves will have faster rates of growth and a higher quality carcass compared with the native calves. The Costa Rican beef production system utilizes a grass-fed finishing program, thus animals are typically slaughtered at about 36 months of age. The resulting heterosis from the U.S.-sired cattle will hopefully decrease the production cycle by at least six months while producing a higher quality carcass for the Costa Rican beef industry. The demand for higher quality beef in Costa Rica is being fueled by a larger number of middle class consumers as well as a growing tourism industry.

“The project has great potential to connect Kansas ranchers with Costa Rican cattlemen to improve the genetics of Costa Rican cattle while increasing export opportunities for Kansas seedstock producers” says Billy Brown, Kansas Department of Agriculture. The interest generated from the project in Costa Rica has already resulted in one cattleman purchasing additional U.S. genetics.

Kansas cattlemen will participate in a field day in January 2015 with Costa Rican cattlemen where they will be able to visually compare the differences between the crossbred calves and the native calves. The project is made possible by the three partnering organizations as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture Foreign Agriculture Service and U.S. Livestock Genetic Export, Inc.