

BEEF BUSINESS 'BULL'ETIN

Midwest Beef Cattle Consultants - W. Mark Hilton, DVM

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Breed Complementarity

Part of my job when I taught at Purdue was working with the Extension Service. I enjoyed giving talks to various beef groups around the state. At one talk I was discussing how nutrition and genetics impacted herd profitability. At the end of the talk during the question-and-answer session a producer that sold bulls of a certain breed challenged me on some things I said regarding genetics and crossbreeding. The crux of my statement was that when crossbreeding we needed to match the breeds used so that they complement each other. He had more of a one-breed-fits-all mentality. I will not mention the breed, but they have very good growth, excellent muscling and low fat. They have some issues with disposition, calving ease, excessive mature size and marbling. So, I said to him, "Okay, I have a herd of cows and their calves grow very well. They have excellent yield grades (large ribeyes and low rib fat), but marbling is very poor. Also, my cows are too big, and disposition is not great." I then asked him, "What would you tell a prospective bull buyer that said I need a bull to 'fix' these problems in my cow herd?" I will never forget his answer. He said, "Oh, I would have *something* to sell him." Most of the audience chuckled because they "got it". I was describing the very problems that his breed has, yet he was unwilling to tell that potential bull buyer that he needed a bull of another breed, something he did not have for sale. He had totally missed the point about breed complementarity.

What breeds best complement each other? With the average cow in the US being 75% Angus, the question becomes, "What breeds compliment Angus?"

People ask me how I got started with Gelbvieh and why I recommend them. The answer is that I learned about Gelbvieh from my top beef clients when I was in veterinary practice in Iowa. I was very fortunate to join a veterinary clinic that was in a very livestock dense area and the northern part of our practice area had topography perfect for beef cows. Those huge rolling hills were not suitable for row crops and having 100-200 beef cows as part of their multi-generation agriculture business was common. While corn was the number one enterprise, the farmers expected every enterprise to be profitable. Their beef cows needed to cash flow. If they did not, it was easy to find someone that wanted to rent that 'rough ground'. (continued on page 2)

Our farm has been working with Dr. Hilton and MBCC for nearly 30 years. I can honestly say you will never find someone more passionate and willing to help you succeed in your beef cattle operation. The quality of the bulls the MBCC team offers for sale is simply tremendous.

The attention they place on genetics, health, and correctness with their breeding program has resulted in significant improvement to our beef operation.

Kevin Holst, Iowa



Nothing prettier than easy fleshing, docile Balancer cows with big, stout calves on summer pasture

(continued from page 1) One of my favorite professors in veterinary school at Purdue told me that I needed to keep my ears open and ask my best clients many questions so I could learn their keys to success. He told me, "Every farm is unique, but there are also similarities. Things that work on one farm may also work on another. Store those facts in your head and use the successes of your top herds to help others." As the years progressed, my experience increased. I was better equipped to help my clients solve problems. I had seen what worked on other farms and had the confidence to share this information.

My top beef cow-calf clients all fed their calves out to slaughter. Many explained to me, "Why should I spend money on excellent genetics and let the cattle feeder reap many of the benefits." Well, I remembered a year on our farm that we decided to feed out our own calves and the market kept sinking lower and we lost \$200/head! My clients replied, "Yep, it's not a guarantee, but most years we make additional profit by feeding them out."

Getting back to "why Gelbvieh", my clients said, "We love the Gelbvieh cross cows for their docility, fertility and mothering ability. They are our favorite cows. They cross great with the Angus. They add muscle and they do not get too fat in the feedlot. The packers love those Angus-Gelbvieh slaughter cattle because they grade choice and we rarely get any yield grade 4's." Many producers also used Simmental in their crossbreeding system and they also liked those cattle, but that was back when Simmentals were larger in frame and had some calving issues. Both of those issues have for the most part been solved in the Simmental breed.

In fact, when a producer has purchased Balancer bulls for many years, I suggest a SimAngus or SimHereford to add some additional hybrid vigor.

The bottom line is that if you describe your cows to me and our bulls do *not* compliment your cows, we will help you find those bulls that do. We think that buying a bull is a really big deal that will impact your herd for years to come.

18th Annual Bull Sale

Please mark your calendar for **Saturday, March 13** for our 18th annual bull sale. We have 30 Balancers, 1 calving ease Angus, 3 SimAngus and 1 SimHereford that we will be selling. As we say every year, sale day gives you your best selection and the best price. If you haul your bull the day of the sale, you receive a \$200 discount off of his sale price. If he stays until May 1 and you haul him, the discount is \$100. We will also have trucking available and we know we will have trucks heading to Illinois, Iowa and Arkansas after the sale.

We frequently add new producers to the newsletter list, and I want to make a case for what I feel is one of the things that sets us apart from other seedstock producers. We have 35 bulls for sale, not 350. We want to take the time to talk to each of you about what bulls best fit your goals. Need a calving ease bull for heifers? We have 17 that qualify as 5-star calving ease guaranteed bulls. Please take a few minutes and call one of the MBCC team members before the sale to explain your goals. While we have the goal to produce bulls that are calving ease, excellent growth, moderate frame, super disposition, and excellent carcass, there are differences in these bulls. If your cows are too big and you want to save back heifers that will be more moderate in frame, we will 'steer' you toward the bulls that are below frame score ~5.5. We do not want to just sell you one bull. We want you to **choose** to purchase **all** of your bulls from us. Our repeat customers are the key to our success, and we will do all we can to help you select bulls that fit your goals so you choose to become a repeat buyer.

This fall I received a call from a longtime customer, and he needed a bull for his fall calving cows. What we had available did not match his goals. I knew a producer that bought a bull from us a few years earlier and I knew he kept back several heifers out of the bull. I thought he might be willing to sell him. I gave the prospective buyer the bull owner's phone number, and they made a deal. That bull still has some usefulness, and it would be a shame to see him go to slaughter. I call this a win-win.



MBCC Evie 1B and bull calf MBCC Useful 8H.
Bull is lot 10 in our upcoming sale. Top 1% CED
"heifer bull" with plenty of growth.

Healthy calves = Healthy Profits

Most colostrum absorption (passive immunity) occurs in the first 6 hours of a calf's life. What does this mean? A calf that jumps up quickly to nurse has a much greater chance to stay healthy from birth to weaning AND even after weaning! If a calf is slow to nurse and gets very little colostrum before 12-18 hours, that calf is 3x more likely to get sick compared to a calf that nursed quickly and aggressively.

One of the most frequent comments we hear from the first-time buyers of our bulls is that they have not seen calves jump up and start nursing so quickly in years. If we ever have a bull calf that is slow to nurse, he gets castrated. I would never sell a bull to any producer that I would not sell to my parents. If we are going to produce cattle that work for us instead of us working for them, helping a calf learn how to nurse is the opposite of our goal.

No Fat Bulls

I have had other seedstock producers come and look at our bulls a week or so ahead of our sale and a common question is, "How do you get people to buy your bulls? They aren't very fleshy." I smile and explain that back about 15 years ago, it was difficult. Buyers were used to going to bull sales and seeing big, heavy bulls with quite a bit of fat. As a veterinarian I saw those bulls later on "sick calls". They had feet problems, they were lazy, and they did not last more than a few years in many cases. My training taught me that developing a bull to be an **endurance athlete** was the better option. We have many producers that trust us that this is a better way. It is much easier to explain the advantages of purchasing an endurance athlete if they had previously bought a bull that had feet issues his first breeding season due to that breeder feeding his bulls too hard. After selecting one of our athletic bulls rather than buying another over conditioned 'couch potato' they saw the difference. They then told their friends, and those producers came and bought an athletic MBCC bull for their beef business.

Here is a note from repeat customer, Dr. Steve Banet; *"I have been purchasing bulls from MBCC for the last 15 years or so. I have been most impressed by the calving ease and docility associated with these bulls. Being a veterinarian, I sure didn't want to come home after pulling calves for clients all day and have to assist my own!! I recently sold a bull I purchased from MBCC in 2011. This bull went on to sire over 300 calves. His initial purchase price was \$3000 and he brought \$1880 at market a few weeks ago. Kind of easy to see why one gets attached to these old bulls. Again, I highly recommend making the MBCC spring bull sale. You won't be disappointed."*

Steve called me this past spring and was quite sad that his old bull had failed his bull breeding soundness exam. I said, "But, Steve, how old is that bull?" He could not recall for sure, but he gave me his ID and since "X" was his letter code, that meant he was born in 2010. The bull was 10 years old! To my knowledge that is the third bull we have sold that made it to or past 10 years of age, breeding cows every year. While it is unusual, it can happen **IF** the bull was developed correctly, cared for exceptionally well by the new owner and the bull started with genetics for longevity.

All of the MBCC team members raise cattle just like you do. They have to live in the 'real world' with no pampering and our bulls are no different. We want these bulls to last for *many* years for you. If you look at our bulls and say, "They just aren't big enough or fleshy enough", please talk to one of our repeat buyers that think they are just fine.

No More Mud and No Wasted Hay

I have written about this before and if you want to see a more detailed article, go to www.mwbeefcattle.com and click on "Educational Material" and "No More Mud".



Hay pad with hay feeder at John and Karen Kestler farm.

The hay pad is one key to not fighting mud all winter long. The other component is to limit hay consumption to 6-8 hours/day. There is a device called a Batt-Latch gate opener (Google it) that allows you to attach it to an electric wire and set it to open automatically. If you work off the farm, you can set the timer to open at noon. Then at 6-8pm all you have to do is walk the cows out of the area, reset the timer and attach the electric wire. If you have 40 cows and you save 25% of your hay (very realistic) from being wasted it takes less than 30 days to pay for the Batt-Latch.

If you are feeding your cows something other than hay during the winter, they should be fed Rumensin at 200mg/hd/day. The cost is about 2-3 cents/head/day and you will save 10% of your hay. Rumensin allows the cow's rumen

bugs to digest more of the feed and use it for energy and protein. The return on investment is around 400-800%.



Left: New hay pad at Bob and Margaret Coon Farm.

Right: Inside hay feeder at Kestler's. It is 10' wide so the bale is farther from the edge. Less hay gets pulled out and wasted. Push new bales in to allow cows to clean up hay from previous bales.



Semen Available on MBCC Herd Sires

Why to Breed Your Heifers & Cows to Balancer bull MBCC Reward 4F (41% Gelbvieh; 59% Angus)

- Top 2% Calving Ease Direct EPD
- Top 10% marbling EPD
- Top 2% Docility EPD
- Top 40% Weaning Weight and Yearling Weight EPD
- Frame Score 4.5 to make very moderate-framed, low-maintenance females
- Below average milk EPD (wait, I thought more was always better?!)
 - The average Balancer female has **plenty** of milk. Higher milk EPDs can lead to reduced fertility in years without tremendous forage production
- Top 15% ADG EPD
- Top 4% Feeder Profit Index (FPI)
- Above breed average for all “cow maker” traits, Calving ease maternal, heifer pregnancy, pregnant at 30 months and stayability.
- Dam is Dam of Merit award winner in 2019.
- Homozygous black, homozygous polled



There are only 9 proven, Balancer AI sires with CED EPD of 21 or higher. Of the 9, **MBCC Reward 4F** is #2 for marbling, #2 for WW, #3 for YW, #1 for docility and #1 for ADG.

This is THE bull to use on all of your heifers and THE bull to make 1200-1250# cows that will be low-maintenance, fertile and easy fleshing.

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Why to Breed Your Cows to Balancer bull MBCC No Risk 8F (31% Gelbvieh; 69% Angus)

- Top 15% CED EPD
- Top 4% WW EPD
- Top 3% YW EPD
- Top 4% marbling EPD
- Super docile
- Top 1% FPI (# 3 active sire in the entire Gelbvieh/Balancer breed)
- Homozygous black, homozygous polled
- His very moderate Watchman dam has a picture-perfect udder and has settled first service AI all 5 years. She is a Dam of Merit in 2019 and 2020.



MBCC No Risk 8F is only bull in the entire Gelbvieh or Balancer breed with 16 or better CED, 85 or better WW, 140 or better YW and 0.7 or better marbling EPDs.

MBCC No Risk 8F will sire tremendous growth and carcass quality. Well over half of every year's calf crop in a commercial herd is destined for the feedlot. MBCC No Risk 8F will sire calves that grow, grade and turn a profit. His greatest legacy will likely be his daughters as they will be outstanding, fertile cows with perfect udders.

Aluminum Stock Trailer for Sale

We are selling our 1998 Exxis aluminum, gooseneck, 20' x 7' trailer. It will be at the auction on March 13 and sell that day. It has all wheel breaks, good tires, new mounted spare, all lights interior and exterior work. Base price is \$8700. Selling because we are purchasing a smaller trailer.

Why Breed Your Cows to MBCC LWO Otis 7G (50% Hereford, 30% Simm, 20% Angus composite)

- Sire is Select Sires bull “Tested” the most complete Hereford bull in the breed (and no more semen available)
- **MBCC LWO Otis 7G’s** Hereford based EPDs rank him:
 - Top 8% CED, 4% BW, 2% WW, 2% YW, 1% marb
- His sire, “Tested” is top 1% EPD for teat and udder score
- Maternal grandsire is ABS Simmental bull “WS Prime Beef Z8”
 - “Prime Beef” EPDs – top 3% CED, 10% WW, 10% YW, 4% marbling
- Red baldy bull that will make gorgeous black baldy calves when used on black cows
- Super disposition
- Will make exceptional replacement females!



If you have Balancer cows, **MBCC LWO Otis 7G** calves will have tremendous hybrid vigor being a 4-breed cross of Gelbvieh-Angus-Hereford-Simmental. I am going to use him heavily in commercial herds with Gelbvieh-Angus genetics this spring. He will also work exceptionally well on Angus based cows

If you have been searching for a Hereford bull that will add hybrid vigor to your herd, but you do not want to give up growth and marbling, this is the bull to use. You look at “Otis” and say, “He looks like a Hereford, but he is much stouter!” Maybe we should call him a “Hereford Plus”!

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If you already AI your females, bring your semen tank to the sale and take home these herd improving sires at \$22.50/straw (10% discount sale day only) 10 straw minimum. If you have not used AI, and you want to start, please call Mark or DJ Weimer, DVM to consult with one of us about selecting an estrus synchronization program that best fits your herd. There are about 25 programs available and we have experience with many of them.

While I am a “numbers guy” and trust the EPDs to help me make genetic decisions, I always look beyond the EPDs. My cattle are treated like commercial cattle and they must live in an un-pampered world. Absolutes for my cattle are excellence in feet and leg structure, docility, teat/udder score and fleshing ability. I also feel strongly that the average cow in the US is too big. I do not want to develop gigantic cattle just to get high growth numbers. My number one goal is to produce bulls that make the best cows that have ever grazed your land. The feedlot cattle out of my bulls will have plenty of growth, finish at a reasonable weight and garner carcass premiums with a high percentage that grade choice and above with no discounts for cattle that are overfat.

How to purchase your new herd sires at the March 13, 2021 MBCC Sale

1. Go to **www.mwbeefcattle.com** and click on “For Sale” to view everything you need
2. Call, text or email an MBCC team member to request a **sale catalog**
3. **Call one of the MBCC team members** so we can learn about your **herd goals**
4. Look at the **EPDs** of all the bulls that fit your criteria
5. Read the **footnotes** in the sale catalog
6. Examine the **videos of the bulls** (after 2/15) on our YouTube channel (put Midwest Beef Cattle Consultants in the search bar)
7. **Register at Liveauctions.TV** for a buyer number

If you can come to the sale in person on **Saturday, March 13** (open house begins at 10am, lunch at noon and sale at 1pm), that is the best option. We do ask those coming to the sale to wear a mask. If you cannot attend, please call Chris Muegge (317-460-6618) to set up a time to come and view the bulls ahead of the sale. Next, call one of the MBCC team members and leave your bid with us (or bid online via **Liveauctions.TV**). We do have a 100% guaranteed sight unseen purchasing program.

For the first time, you will also have the option to bid on any animal online. **Live Auctions TV** will be streaming our sale live. Go to **liveauctions.tv** and register today for a buyer number.

Contact Us

Please call for more information about our cattle program

Midwest Beef Cattle Consultants

W. Mark Hilton, DVM
5497 Shootingstar Lane
West Lafayette, IN
47906

765-714-1092
www.mwbeefcattle.com
wmarkhilton@gmail.com

Midwest Beef Cattle Consultants — Superior Genetics for Profit-minded Beef Producers

Additional Information on 18th Annual Open House and Sale March 13, 2021

In addition to the 35 bulls we will be offering, we will have 15 open females and 5 bred females/pairs for sale. Our females have sold very well in previous sales and when I have called later to check with the buyers, the answer is always the same. "These females are exactly as you promised, great disposition, fertile, easy fleshing and wean off a big calf." These females have a base price just like the bulls and if they do not sell, we are keeping them for our own herds. They are absolutely replacement quality females. The bred females/pairs are all first calf heifers or young cows. These females will calve this spring and we expect them to have long, productive, profitable careers in your herd.

Our 35 bulls on test come from MBCC and cooperator herds representing over 400 cows, so these bulls are truly the 'cream of their crop'. I can think of few other bull sales in our area where you will find bulls that are literally in the top 20% of the herd. Producers that select our bulls tend to fall into one of two categories. The first are producers that have an exceptional herd and must purchase bulls that are superior in calving ease, growth, maternal ability, docility and carcass. An average bull would set them back for years. Our other group are producers that look at their herd and say, "I want to do better". They call us before the sale and explain their frustrations. After a 20 minute conversation we have a short list of bulls that will solve their concerns and we generally have a new customer. We want our bulls to be an *investment* in the future of your herd and not simply an expense.

Half of the bulls we will be selling are 5 star calving ease bulls and guaranteed for use on heifers, 69% are top 35% for weaning weight EPD, 64% are top 35% for yearling weight and 94% are top 35% for marbling. Average frame score will be 5.0-5.5 which would equal a 1200-1275# mature weight cow. Disposition is outstanding on 100% of the bulls.

Directions to Muegge farm—3824 S Binford Rd, Carthage, IN 46115

From intersection of SR 9 and Hwy 40, Greenfield: Go south on SR 9 for 3 miles to 300 S. Turn left and go 5.1 miles to Binford Rd (angles SE). (At 600E you jog south for about 10 feet. Immediately jog back east to stay on 300S. GPS may mess you up here!) Angle right on Binford and go 1.3 miles to farm on left. It is just past the stop sign. Look for "MBCC Bull Sale" signs.