



What to do with The F1 Steer?

Story by Rachel Cutrer • Feedlot photos by Cassie Schulte • Speaker photos by Coleman Locke

While many producers rant and rave about the attributes of the F1 female, there is often the question of: “What do I do with the F1 steers?” Fortunately, today there are plenty of options for F1 producers to make the steer mates to their F1 females just as profitable.

Through the efforts of producer cooperative groups like the Brahman Influenced Marketing Group (BIM), F1 producers can get extra value out of their steer calves. They need only to follow the program guidelines while partnering with other shareholders in the industry who share an interest in Brahman hybrid cattle.

“BIM’s goal is to help producers get a little extra out of their steers,” explains Joe Brockett, a representative of BIM.

Since their formation in 2002, BIM has helped establish a premium for Brahman influenced steers by creating a market of offering reputable, source verified, healthy cattle.

“The national average for producers who participate in this type of program is somewhere around a premium of \$8/cwt,” reports Brockett. “Producers who participate in BIM sales have averaged a premium of up to \$15/cwt.”

The BIM program is a basic VAC-45 program, tailor made for F1s. Cattle from program participants are comingled to create uniform lots. Groups entirely from individual ranches are created from operations contributing 50 or more head of ranch-raised steers.



Joe Brockett, Brahman Influenced Marketing Group, have helped producers get up to \$15/cwt premium at special BIM sales, where buyers demand the Brahman hybrid steer.

Brahman influenced cattle entering the feedyard display numerous characteristics that make for a favorable feeding experience. “Every attribute that we love about the F1 female can also be found in their F1 steer mates,” Gray explains. “Performance, hardiness, health, and efficiency are all attributes we’ve found while feeding thousands of F1 steers at Graham Land and Cattle.”

Joe Paschal, Livestock Specialist with Texas AgriLife Extension, agrees with Gray. “If you’re feeding F1 cattle - whether to sell them live, in the beef, or on some sort of grade and yield equation - one

BRAHMAN HYBRIDS DISPLAY THE TRAITS THAT MATTER IN FEEDING CATTLE

Jay Gray of Graham Land and Cattle, Gonzales, Texas, knows firsthand the value of the F1 steer. Graham Land and Cattle is a popular cattle feeding operation for producers in the south, where Brahman influence is common. Gray is a firm believer in the efficiency and opportunities that lie in feeding Brahman hybrid steers.

In his experience, Gray has found the F1 steer to be high-performing and very efficient, putting a practical spin on the proven scientific research that shows the Brahman to be the #1 beef breed for efficiency. “The efficiency advantage of the Brahman hybrid is especially crucial in the cattle feeding business, since grain conversion is the #1 thing a feed yard looks at,” he reports.

“The F1 steers perform,” Gray continues, “They are some of the best performing cattle we have.”

of the first things you’ll notice is that the Brahman influenced cattle don’t get sick as much, don’t die, and they have higher feed conversion and higher average daily gain,” Paschal says.

He adds that Brahman hybrid cattle really aren’t that much different from other breeds in terms of feeding. In fact, they have some advantages. “When you put those cattle in the feedyard, we don’t see any real differences in terms of sickness, feedyard performance, or efficiency compared to any other cross,” Paschal describes. “In fact, most of the time, F1 cattle are superior to straight-breds, and superior to F1 cattle that do not have Brahman influence in terms of carcass performance, reduction in death loss and sickness, and in feed efficiency.”

While Gray feeds cattle in the southern part of Texas, Shelby Horn of Great Plains Feedyard operates in Hereford, located in the panhandle of Texas, and agrees with Gray.

“We’ve been very pleased with how these cattle perform,” Horn states. “The consumption is good. Our Brahman hybrid cattle typically close out gaining over 3 lbs. a day.” This gain is above average compared to other cattle Horn feeds. “These steers perform as well as any other cattle we feed,” he reports.

COLD TOLERANCE

Some may express concerns about the cold tolerance of Brahman hybrid steers when fed in northern locations through the winter. However recent hands on experiences at both Graham’s and at Great Plains Feedyard prove otherwise.

“Some say the cattle have trouble feeding through the winter,” Gray admits, “but if the cattle are well taken care of, they’ll do just fine.”



Jay Gray, Graham Land and Cattle, describes the Brahman hybrid steer as ‘naturally lean and offering a highly desirable product to the consumer.’

Horn and his crew at Great Plains recently fed out over 200 head of half-blood F1 Brahman steers, through one of the coldest winters in the history of the Texas panhandle.

"We get along really well with half-blood Brahman cattle in the Texas panhandle...especially the true F1 steers," explains Horn. "The true F1s will grow plenty of hair and handle the winters very well."

CARCASS PERFORMANCE

In his experiences, Horn is pleased with the performance of the Brahman F1 steers. "From a yield grade standpoint, Brahman hybrid steers perform very well," he says. "I expect these type steers to be 70% yield grade 1's and 2's, with very few yield grade 4's."

He adds that the dressing percentage of Brahman cattle is higher than to be expected from other breeds, "We'll also have a really good dressing percentage with the thin hides on these cattle, they'll dress anywhere from 64 to 65%."

Actually, recent close-out data from a pen of 215 head of half-blood Brahman steers, raised by Deep Creek Cattle Company, surpassed Horn's already high expectations for Brahman hybrid steers.

The Deep Creek steers averaged 3.42 lbs. of gain per day and had an average dressing percentage of 66%. Of the steers, 97% graded Choice or Select, and 99% had a yield grade of 1, 2 or 3. Each steer averaged a profit of \$107.19.

"The Brahman breed has also made tremendous improvements in terms of carcass tenderness," reports Paschal.

"The ABBA started a carcass evaluation program about 10 years

ago, and one of its priorities was improving tenderness," Paschal explains. "In the carcass evaluation program they take a steak

out of each steer for tenderness analysis. Recent data shows the average shear force to be under 8 lbs. Ten years ago, this value was closer to 10, so the breed has made a lot of progress in terms of tenderness."

Gray reports that the Nolan Ryan Tender Aged Beef Program helps in promoting these carcass traits and marketing beef from Brahman F1 steers. "About 75% of these steers at Graham go to the Nolan Ryan Program," explains Gray. "These cattle are naturally lean and offer a highly desirable product to the consumer."

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR FEEDING F1 STEERS

The future looks bright for producers of Brahman hybrid steers, especially as more data and information is available to document the performance of these efficiency machines. As Brockett explains, "I know what the Brahman hybrid steers will do...and it's a whole lot more than people in the industry think!"

Horn agrees, and gladly feeds Brahman hybrid steers at his feedyard. "When you put all the factors together - efficiency, yield grade, and dressing percentage - I expect these type cattle to bring back a premium on the grid; especially with the Choice/Select spread being \$3.00 to \$5.00 like we experienced last year," he advises.

Horn perhaps summarizes it best when describing the F1 steer, "The hybrid vigor of the true F1 Brahman certainly helps in cattle feeding, as well as

raising productive females." ©TABR



Through his experience coordinating the ABBA Carcass Evaluation Project, Dr. Joe Paschal reports that Brahman cattle have made tremendous improvements in carcass merit.



A SNAPSHOT AT WHAT THE F1 STEER CAN DO

In the winter of 2010, a pen of 211 head of half-blood Brahman hybrid steers, like this one, cleared a net profit of \$107.19/head, according to data from Great Plains Cattle Feeders. These steers, all sired by registered Brahman bulls and raised by Deep Creek Cattle Company were fed during one of the coldest winters in the Texas Panhandle. They are part of new data proving that Brahman hybrids perform just as well in the feedlot and on the rail as they do in the pasture.

PERFORMANCE DATA

- ADG: 3.42
- Average In Weight: 630 lbs.
- Average Out Weight: 1,224 lbs.

CARCASS DATA

- Average Dressing %: 66%
- 32% Choice
- 65% Select
- 99% Yield Grade 1, 2 or 3

**AVERAGE
NET PROFIT
PER HEAD:
\$107.19**