

2007 Cattle Industry Annual Convention & Trade Show

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Boosting Genetics with AI

Producers advance using proven genetics and AI as risk management tools.

by **Steve Suther**

NASHVILLE, TENN. (Jan. 31, 2007) — A few years ago, you just produced calves and put them on the market. Now, the market demands more focus. Millersburg, Mo., producer Mike Kasten told Cattlemen's College® attendees he decided to produce females that work in a low-input forage system.

They must also produce a calf each year, work well in the feedlot and cooler, and fit the white-tablecloth restaurant demand.

Of all the challenges cattlemen face — including prices, costs, weather and policy shifts — genetic selection is the one they can control, Kasten said. “Through genetics, you can then exert some control over most of the other challenges,” he said.

Artificial insemination (AI) makes the best bulls in the industry available to everyone, and that's why Kasten has been AIing for 32 years.

Tedious heat observations for several weeks gave way in recent years to heat synchronization. The current use of CIDR devices in cows has resulted in 60%-70% settled after a seven-day program. Heifers do nearly as well, and cleanup bulls related to the AI sires are turned out 14 days after AI. Labor requirements have been 12-13 minutes per heifer or cow, respectively.

Noting that 78% of the first heifers AIed with CIDRs in 2001 are still in the herd, Kasten further ventured it may be possible to stack generations of females that are more likely to conceive through AI as more than 90% of those first heifers have done in his herd.

Daniel Schafer of MFA Inc. challenged producers to make use of AI technology so



►MFA's Daniel Schafer (left) and Missouri producer Mike Kasten shared benefits realized through upgrading genetics through an AI program. A study funded by MFA found a \$90-per-calf value advantage for the use of AI vs. natural service.

that U.S. beef can continue as a world leader in high-quality beef. In the decade ending with 2003, he said Brazil increased use of AI 161%, or from 1.9 million units to 4.9 million units, while the U.S. decreased use by 8% and now rests at barely more than 1 million units.

He presented results of a 2006 MFA Health Track Value-Added Producer Grant that found a \$90-per-calf value advantage for the use of high-accuracy AI sires vs. natural-service sires.

Schafer and Kasten made their comments during the Cattlemen's College session “PR103: Implications of Using Proven

Genetics in an AI Program.” For more on this presentation, view the [accompanying PowerPoint presentation](#). Audio files of both presentations are available in the www.4cattlemen.com newsroom.

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