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## Simbrahs working in Kansas

By Martha Hollida Garrett

Cattle have been a part of the Stenstrom family history for several generations. This central Kansas family operation has seen their cattle herd follow along the lines of the industry over the decades from an Angus based herd, to incorporation of Hereford genetics to Black Baldys and then when the continental breeds arrived, they added Simmental genetics. Then in 2004, they didn't follow the same route as their peers in the Sun-flower state, as they purchased Simbrah bulls.

"By this time our commercial cowherd had evolved to pretty much an unregistered Simmental program. We felt we needed to bring in another breed to capitalize on heterosis and we began evaluating our options," described Dr. Mike Stenstrom, who along

with his wife, Kristol, their three children and his parents run Stenstrom Cattle Company in White City, 40 miles south of Manhattan, Kan-sas.

Their search led them to the Simbrah breed and about the same time, a friend told them about a breeder in Texas that he had met at a cattle conference that had a large performance and carcass based program. That breeder was Bill Travis with Pine Ridge Ranch, Athens, Tex-as.

The Stenstroms visited the East Texas operation and studied their cattle and the selection criteria the Travis' had used to build their program. They were impressed by the PRR cattle and excited about the opportunity to add bulls from a program that utilized ultrasound, feedlot and

harvesting data in their selections of herd sires and donors.

They didn't buy a bull on that first visit, as they were on a fact-finding trip and still trying to decide if Simbrah was the route they wanted to take. At this time, their cowherd was about 100 cows.

"The Travis', both Bill and Jane, were so enthusiastic about their program and the breed that we ultimately reached a decision to try a Simbrah bull. Our first purchase was a bull that Pine Ridge Ranch consigned to the International Simmental/Simbrah Sale at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo," recalls Stenstrom.

That bull made a believer out of the father/son duo and they have purchased additional bulls from Pine Ridge Ranch over the 11 years since

that first purchase. They have also started their own registered Simbrah program based on how the breed worked in their commercial segment. They have used some of their own bulls on the commercial herd, too. They have made registered female purchases from Buzzard Hollow Ranch, La Muneca Cattle Co., Tom-Lin Ranch, La Negra Cattle Co. and Pine Ridge.

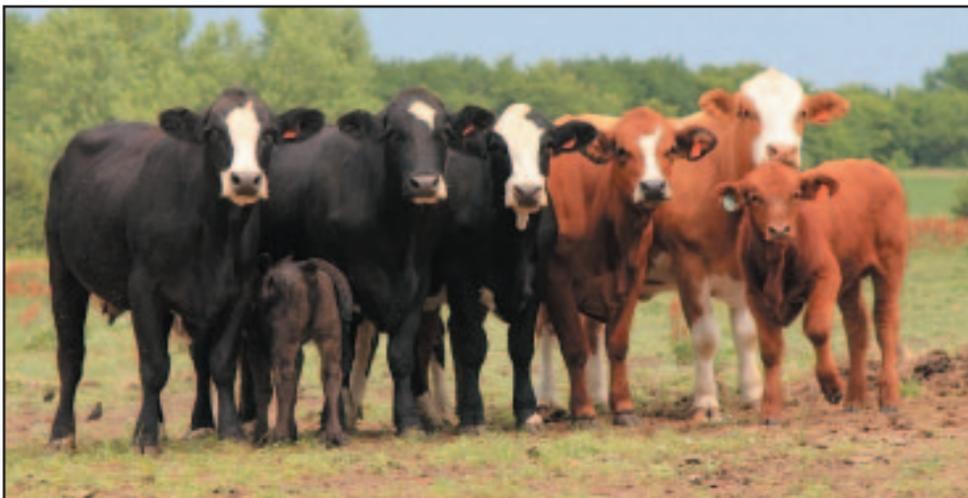
The Simbrah bulls have worked for this operation and contrary to popular thinking, the cold winters of Kansas have not been a factor. They maintain a spring calving herd across both herds.

"We have had no condition issues with the Sim-brahs and they grow all the hair they need to withstand winter. Environment is a non-factor in the winter, but it has been beneficial to have them in the summer and in the drought years. We have experienced a lot of interest from our neighbors about Simbrah over the years. It hasn't necessarily resulted in customers, but we sell our calves to a local feedlot and they like the calves--- obviously, as every year they want them when we wean," explains Stenstrom, adding that the Simbrah sired calves have showed a lot of growth.

They do evaluate EPDs and like their bulls to be strong in carcass traits, heavy muscled, moderate in frame size, polled, with a lot of capacity and clean sheaths, but they are not opposed to the bulls hav-



Drs. Mike and Kristol Stenstrom with their children (l to r) Arik (11), Sofia (14), Kjell (9).



Part of the Stenstrom's registered Simbrah herd in Kansas.



Simbrah bulls are utilized on the Stenstrom commercial cowherd.

ing some leather in the neck area.

"The same kind of bulls that are desired in the South are wanted here," he said.

Stenstrom and his wife, Kristol, who are both Kansas State grads, and their three children reside outside of the Kansas City area. They are both small animal vets and she specializes in acupuncture in all species. His parents take care of the cattle on a daily basis and they have been very pleased with the disposition of their Simbrahs.

"My parents are now well into their 80's and dad's health has become an issue. We've cut the commercial herd numbers back to about 40 cows recently just to make things manageable for them and us.

We do have a few registered Simbrahs here where we live as our daughter is showing a registered Sim-brah female we purchased from Tom-Lin Ranch.

Stenstrom continues to be excited about Simbrah and feels that in time, the breed will be more populous in the Midwest.

"People just have a lot of pre-conceived ideas about their dispositions and that they are a hot weather only breed, but over time and as our cattle continue to work, I think Simbrah and other eared breeds will be more accepted. The performance of the cattle is good and we just have to get people to look at that over the negative perceptions," he concludes.



This is a Simbrah bull bred in the Stenstrom's registered program that will be used on their commercial herd. He is a son of LMC Johnnie Walker and carries all Pine Ridge breeding maternally.