

What color are the best cattle?

Each year I buy over 100 young heifers.

We then grow and fatten these animals in our pastures.

Until they are the proper size and condition for our customers.

That normally takes three to nine months.

The accompanying photos are of the 20 animals that remain to finish and harvest this Fall.

We have already harvested over 80.

Within that 80 were many other colors and breeds.

Prospective customers frequently ask what breed of cattle I raise.

I give them an honest answer.

“I buy animals that I believe will meet our customer’s expectations.”

Sometimes that is NOT what they want to hear.

If they have a farm background or if their Uncle Wally raises cattle, they want to hear the breed that they know.

Worse than that are the people who have done “research” on beef breeds in anticipation of buying meat directly from a farmer.



That research information is normally just breed promotion nonsense.

Often what they find on the Internet has convinced them that there is a “best” breed.

It just ain’t so.

Every viable breed of cattle has excellent animals, and every breed has poor animals.

The ratios may change, but nevertheless, every breed has useful animals.

About 60% of our cattle are sold to customers by the ¼ animal for “cuts”.

Those carcasses must reach a high level of finish.

“Finish” means the animals need to be sufficiently grass fat.

We do not feed grain.

About 25% of our beef animals are sold for ground meat (hamburger).

The butcher shop grinds all the meat from the animal and controls the fat content to 10%, 90% lean.

Animals for ground need not be young, but they should not be either too fat or too lean.

The remaining 15% of our animals are converted into boneless roasts and ground. Mature, but not old cows can be perfect for this.

You can easily see from the photos that I do not feel confined to one breed or one color.

In fact, I tend to sprinkle the herd with colorful animals.

Although each of the cattle has the unique color or color pattern of a particular breed, most in fact are crossbreds.

Cross bred cattle have what is called “hybrid vigor”.

In general hybrids are healthier.

I buy this mix of mixed animals for several reasons.



1. They are healthier.

2. They have different body configurations.

That allows me to select body types for specific customers.

3. They have different growth rates.

In general, that means there are animals reaching their peak finish throughout the August to November harvest season.

4. Because the variety of colors, patterns and body shapes make what I think is a pretty herd.

In the **first photo**, the heifer in front has Hereford markings, but probably not purebred.

The red animal at the far left looks most like a Red Angus.

Next to her is a Black Angus.
The next red animal is probably not Red Angus.
The poll or top of her head is too rectangular.
She may have Gelbvieh, or Simmental ancestry.
The animal to the far right looks most like a Limousin.
Hereford cattle originated in England.
Angus are from Scotland.
Gelbvieh are of German origin.
Simmental are Swiss.
Limousin are French.
The front heifer in the **second photo** is black with a white belt.
She is most likely a Belted Galloway.
Galloway cattle are Scottish.



She could also be a Dutch Belted or a member of several other minor breeds.
The black animal with a white face is clearly a crossbred.
That particular combination can be produced in a number of ways but is most commonly the result of mating a Black Angus with a Hereford.
The color pattern is called, "Black Baldy".
The two heifers to the right have common Simmental markings.
Simmental can come in several distinctive patterns including total black.

The **third photo** again shows a Simmental heifer. Her color pattern is also typical of the Guernsey dairy breed, but she is fattening too well to be dairy.

Most common dairy breeds in the US have been fed grain so long that they have lost the ability to do well on a grass-only diet.

The heifer in the **fourth photo** is an odd ball.

She was born here in late 2019 from a Jersey cow.

Jerseys are the only US dairy breed that has retained the ability to fatten well on grass.

Even so, they might be three years old before they fatten.

I buy an occasional Jersey for ground beef.

The meat is especially tasty.

I knew the Jersey cow was pregnant when I bought her.



I expected a full blood Jersey calf.

Clearly this heifer's mother crossed the line.

She fell for a rodeo star.

A Texas Longhorn.

The heifer is doing well on grass.

Best regards.

Tom