Defining Quality: A Global Perspective on Beef Production

Message from the Executive Vice President Paul Maulsby

One of the greatest privileges of serving the American Brahman Breeders Association is the opportunity to travel on behalf of our membership and represent the breed around the world. Through our international partnerships and educational programming, including opportunities made possible through the U.S. Livestock Genetics Export (USLGE) Program, I have the opportunity to share the story of the American Brahman breed, the work of our Association, and the programs that support breeders both domestically and internationally.

While every country has its own production systems, environments, and challenges, I continue to find that many of the questions are remarkably similar. Conversations often center around DNA technology, high-density genomic testing, parentage verification, and Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) as breeders look for tools to improve selection decisions and accelerate genetic progress. Just as common is the discussion surrounding beef quality—not simply how to produce more beef, but how to produce beef that best meets the expectations of consumers within each country's unique marketplace.

Perhaps the most thought-provoking conversation begins with a simple question that I often ask: "What does quality beef look like in your country?" The answers are never exactly the same. Around the world, beef is produced, marketed, prepared, and consumed in many different ways. Some countries rely primarily on grain-finished cattle, while others produce grass-finished beef or utilize feeding resources unique to their region. Consumer preferences, cultural traditions, available feed resources, and methods of preparing beef all influence what is considered desirable. None of these systems is more correct than another—they simply reflect the needs, resources, and expectations of the markets they serve.

In the United States, we are fortunate to have an established grading system that evaluates both quality and yield, creating economic incentives tied to carcass merit and consumer demand. Many of the countries I visit do not yet have comparable grading systems or the infrastructure to consistently measure carcass performance. That reality makes our discussions about genetic selection especially valuable. While no single trait, EPD, DNA test, or management practice can define or guarantee beef quality, incorporating cattle with measurable carcass merit, performance records, and genomic information into a balanced breeding program can help move a herd in the right direction. Equally important is recognizing the environmental limitations, forage resources, and production systems within each country and selecting cattle that are best suited to perform under those conditions.

This is where I believe the American Brahman breed has an incredible opportunity. Brahman genetics are uniquely adapted to thrive in the tropical and subtropical environments found throughout Central America, South America, and many regions of the world. As producers continue striving to improve beef quality while maintaining adaptability, fertility, longevity, and efficiency, Brahman genetics can serve as a pivotal part of that equation. Whether utilized in purebred or crossbreeding systems, today's American Brahman offers far more than environmental adaptability—it brings documented performance, maternal strength, carcass merit,

and the genetic tools necessary to make informed breeding decisions that fit a wide range of production goals.

One of the greatest lessons I continue to learn through international travel is that education is never one-sided. While we have much to share through the research, technology, and genetic evaluation programs developed by ABBA, we also have much to learn from the experiences, innovations, and perspectives of cattlemen around the world. Every conversation broadens our understanding of global beef production and reminds us that successful cattle breeding begins with understanding the goals of the people we serve—not simply applying our own standards.

As we continue expanding the international presence of the American Brahman breed, I remain encouraged by the enthusiasm and confidence breeders around the world place in American genetics and in the American Brahman Breeders Association. By sharing knowledge, listening to one another, and embracing both science and practical experience, we strengthen not only the Brahman breed but also the global beef industry that depends upon it.

Paul Maulsby
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