

Who's Interested in Mixed Breed Sires and Why?



By Judd Hanson,
VP U.S. Strategic Sales, GENEX

Over the past five years, breed influence in the U.S. dairy cattle industry has evolved. The genetic influence of the Jersey breed has grown, and the Jersey generation is here. Along with this evolution has come an increased recognition and appreciation of the F1 HoJo cow.

This HoJo cow (defined as a Jersey x Holstein cross or Holstein x Jersey cross) is a favorite among producers who have utilized some simple crossbreeding or those who have converted from Holsteins to Jerseys. Due to the popularity of the F1 cow, producers have also shown a desire to utilize F1 sires. In fact, looking at the 2018 industry demographics, 99% of U.S. dairy cattle on DHI are coded as Holstein, Jersey or crossbred genetics.¹

In April 2019, the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding (CDCB) began releasing genomic evaluations for crossbred animals. Simply stated, these evaluations are based on the animal's weighted combination of the purebred populations. This opened the door to use of mixed breed sires on commercial dairies, as many progressive commercial producers were looking for additional Holstein and Jersey genetic lines.

The GENEX logo, featuring the word "GENEX" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized white icon of a cow's head in profile, facing right, with a small 'X' shape above it.

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Who is Interested in Mixed Breed Sires?

Today, Mixed Breed sires have drawn the interest of a wide range of people for many different reasons.

- › **Commercial dairies of any color.** The economic advantage of the F1 cow is generally well accepted in the industry and is driving commercial producers to want F1 cows and, subsequently, Mixed Breed service sires.
- › **Processors.** Milk processors are demanding high component milk, and this is driving the desire for Mixed Breed sires. Increasing total component yield is critical to maintaining profitable milk pricing, especially in down milk markets.
- › **Holstein converters.** There are Holstein producers who want the benefits of Jersey genetics (feed efficiency, components, etc.) without the intense management involved in a crossbreeding scheme. Additionally, these producers are often looking for a “larger than Jersey” frame size, so their cows can continue to work in existing facilities without updating stall or parlor size.
- › **Jersey herds looking for more Holstein-influenced genetics.** There’s been a shift in some Jersey herds, as they go back to utilizing some Holstein genetics for more milk. In particular, these herds are looking to improve the specific traits Holsteins excel in and the Jersey breed is less stellar in, such as Somatic Cell Score.
- › **Grazing herds.** The body size and components of this new Mixed Breed genetic line fit many demands of today’s graziers, namely the smaller body size that in turn helps with feed efficiency. Additionally, the GENEX Mixed Breed product-line should yield more A2A2 sires particularly in comparison to our existing Holstein product-line.

Several genetics companies offer Mixed Breed sires, identified with an XD stud code. Utilize the GENEX Dairy Bull Search app to view the Mixed Breed sire offerings industrywide.

If considering adding Mixed Breed service sires to your breeding program, contact your genetic consultant to help develop your breeding plan. ■

¹ Guinan, Fiona. “Changes in the Breed Composition of U.S. Dairy Herds.” CDCB Connection. January 2020.